

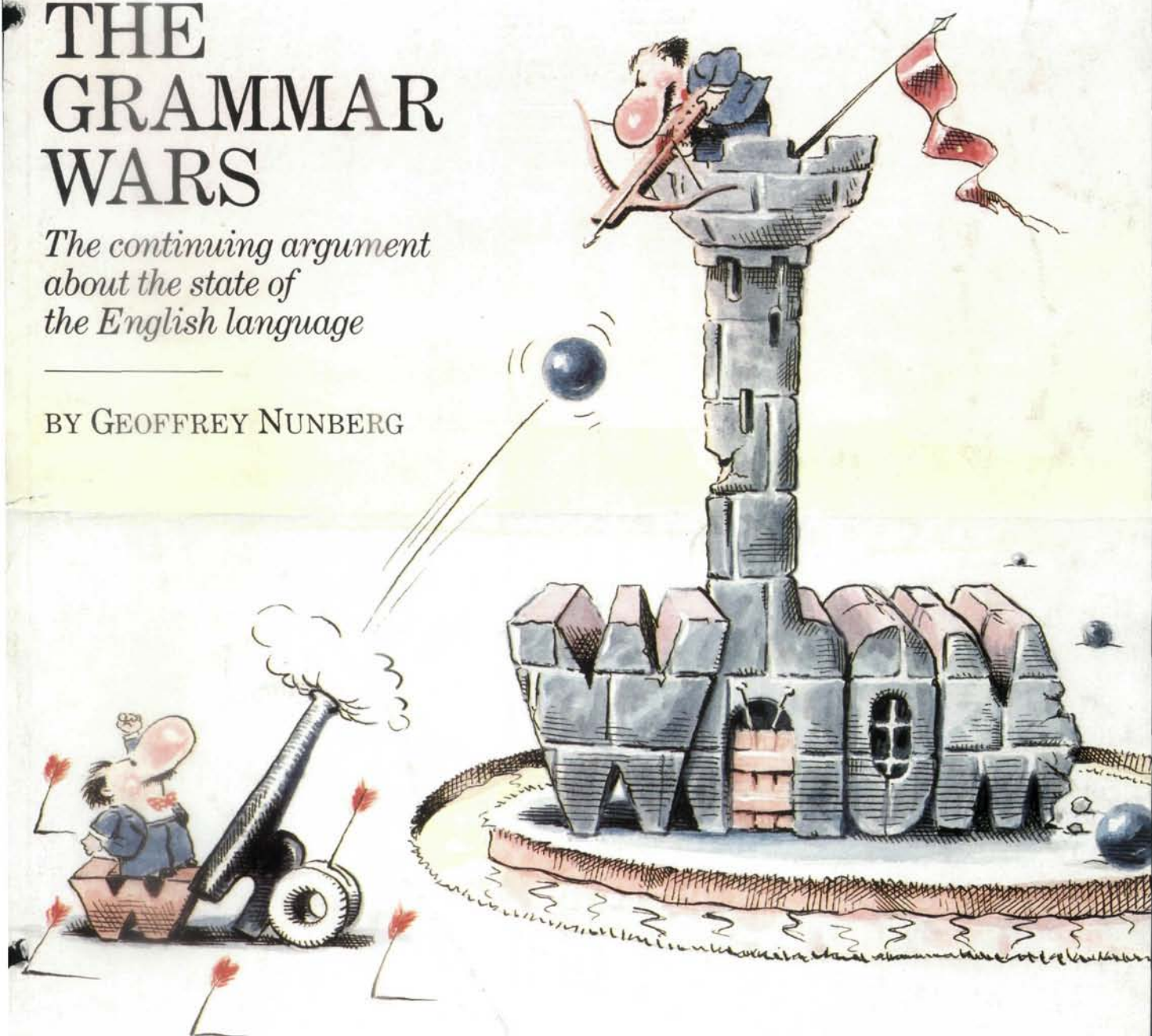
THE Atlantic

THE HEALTH OF THE TV NETWORKS / HOW THE BEST-SELLER LISTS ARE COMPILED

THE GRAMMAR WARS

The continuing argument about the state of the English language

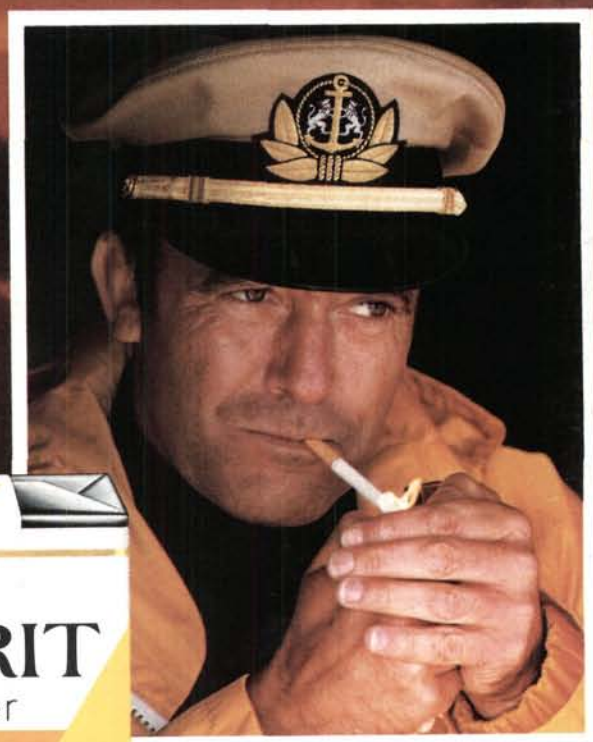
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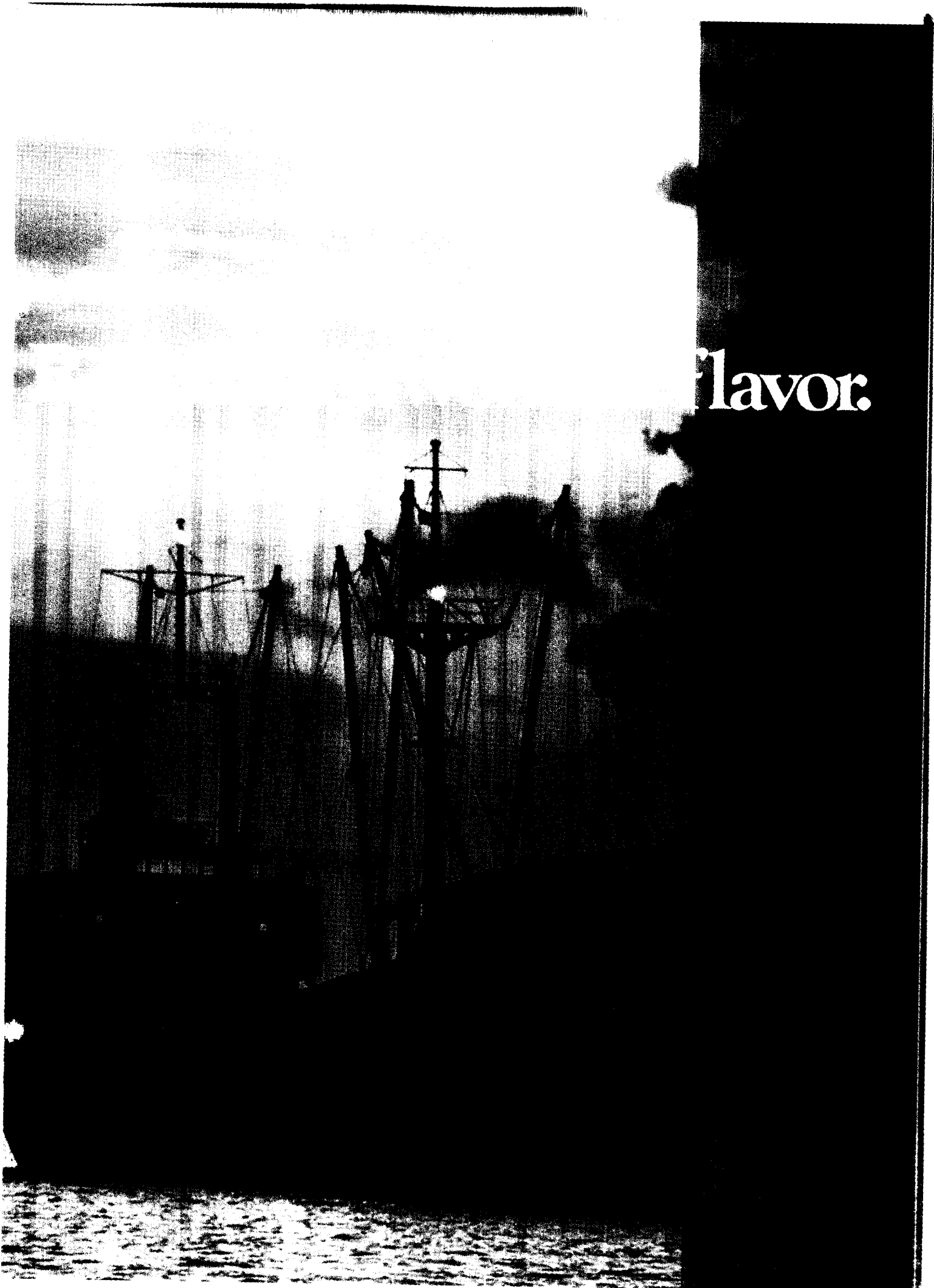
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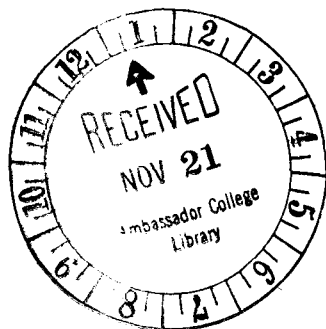
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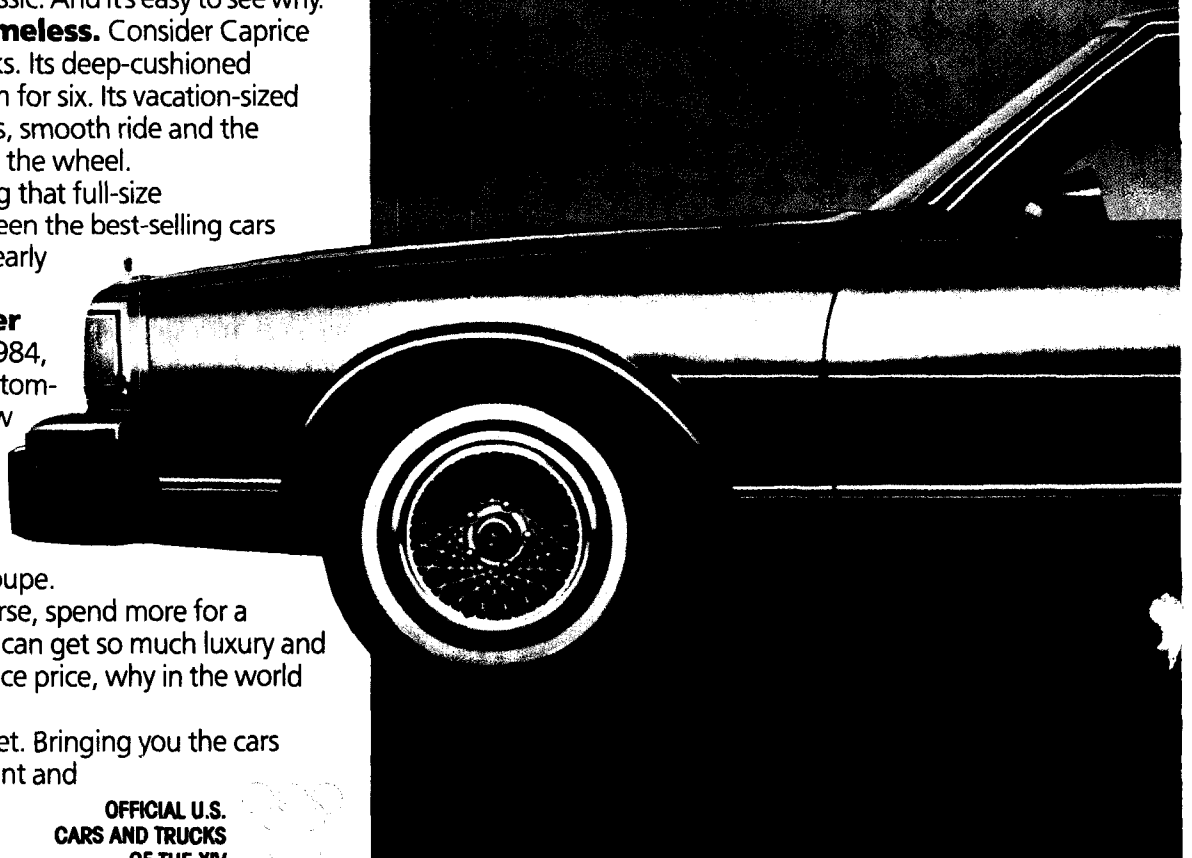
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEBATE OVER DETERRENCE

James Q. Wilson's excellent review of the extensive research on the effects of criminal sanctions ("Thinking About Crime," September *Atlantic*) finds that the weight of the evidence clearly demonstrates that sanctions *do* have an effect on criminal behavior. Curiously, he then concludes that "penalizing wrong conduct and rewarding good conduct are right policies in themselves, *whatever effect they may have*" (emphasis added).

This point is particularly salient because much of the research on deterrence cited by Professor Wilson has been sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. The purpose of these studies, however, is not to confirm the obvious but to determine how much of a sanction is needed to produce the desired effect. The difficult task for public-policy research is to discover how much punishment and of what type should be administered to which individuals in order to reduce crime most effectively.

This concern for practical application is a key component in federal research policy. Researchers must ask the questions that policy-makers ask and provide answers that work in the real world.

JAMES K. STEWART

Director, National Institute of Justice
Washington, D.C.

I found three of James Q. Wilson's arguments particularly dubious:

First, Wilson discusses statistics that show that the rate of drinking-related automobile accidents among youths increased when states lowered their drinking age to eighteen and decreased when the drinking age was raised back up to twenty. From these findings he concludes that "changes in the probability of being punished can lead to changes in behavior." To me, the evidence points to a much more commonsense conclusion: fewer accidents occurred with higher drinking ages simply because fewer youths were able to get hold of alcohol. Whatever punishment Wilson has in mind here (he fails to tell us) as the deterring influence on young would-be-drunk drivers, its impact on accident rates is surely subordinate to the effect

of limiting young drivers' access to liquor.

Second, Wilson cites an instance in which colluding bakery firms ended their price-fixing practices after the government filed an official complaint against them. He concluded from the bakers' unsurprising response that "white-collar crime can also be deterred." But Wilson is hardly justified in calling this an example of deterrence. After all, nothing deterred the bakery firms from colluding in the first place. The standard usage of "deterrence" has to do with the instilling of doubts or fears in the would-be criminal's mind—*before* any crime is committed—and has nothing to do with responses the perpetrator makes *after* he has been found out.

Third, Wilson hails a study on draft evasion as one of "the very best studies of deterrence." The researchers, Blumstein and Nagin, concluded that draft evasion is deterrable, because they found that the higher a state's conviction rate, the lower the incidence of draft evasion. But this inverted relationship between draft-evasion convictions and offenses does not necessarily indicate the presence of deterrence. It is not surprising that such a correlation exists, since the judicial system so often reflects the political climate of its jurisdiction. A conservative, patriotic judge in a likewise conservative and patriotic district would be more likely to convict a draft-evasion offender, but he would also have fewer such offenses on his hands, because the local population would produce fewer adamantly anti-war radicals. Similarly, a liberal judge would be less inclined to convict, but would have more offenders to deal with because of the probably liberal and dissenting attitudes of his area.

BEN SINGER

Boston, Mass.

James Q. Wilson replies:

Ben Singer raises three points: on the first he misunderstands me, on the second he makes an error in logic, and on the third he makes a mistake of fact. He is right that the lower auto-accident rate following the raising of a state's minimum drinking age was in part due to the

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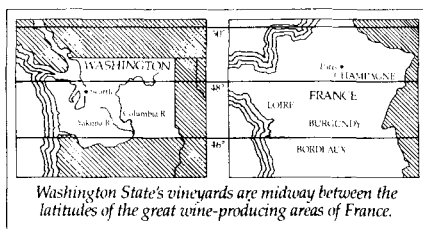
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greater difficulty youths had in buying liquor. That is what I was trying to say—namely, that the law, backed by sanctions, altered behavior, whether directly or indirectly. Singer is wrong to think that enforcing the antitrust laws against bakers who collude on prices is not an example of deterrence. That point of view is tantamount to the assertion that the deterrent effect of a law can be truly tested only when the law is not enforced—a silly statement. Singer supposes that the negative correlation between draft-evasion rates and being punished for such evasion might be spurious, the result of the fact that states with high rates of draft evasion may also have been states with judges tolerant of draft evaders. A nice supposition, but if he read the original study instead of writing a letter to *The Atlantic*, he would have discovered that the authors, Blumstein and Nagin, tested for that possibility in two ways: first, by controlling for public opinion about the war in each state (it had no effect on the connection between sanctions and evasion) and, second, by controlling for region so as to measure the connection between sanctions and evasion separately in, say, southern states where there was little support for draft evaders (again, their findings remained intact).

Professor Wilson's thoughtful article on deterrence and crime recalls an incident that occurred recently in a Manhattan night court. The case involved a three-card-monte player who had been arrested on 42nd Street. He had numerous prior arrests for playing three-card monte, all in Queens. For his last offense, he had been sentenced to two weeks, his first stay in jail. The prosecutor recommended a similar sentence for this offense. The judge voiced his doubt, noting that three-card monte was not Manhattan's most serious problem. The prosecutor acknowledged the point, but reminded the judge that the defendant was "no longer playing three-card monte in Queens."

PAUL SHECHTMAN
New York, N.Y.

SENATE STRATEGY

Shirley Christian ("Washington: Foreign Danger," October *Atlantic*) provides a useful look at the problems members of Congress face in trying to

balance the national interest in foreign policy against constituent pressures on emotional issues such as the Panama Canal treaties. However, her article is marred by a muddled rendering of events related to the development of the strategy for Senate approval of the treaties.

She assigns pivotal importance to a trip to Panama by Howard Baker in 1978, and to what she describes as subsequent strategy developed in response to a poll commissioned by Baker in Tennessee. According to her account, it was Baker's "plan" to "amend the treaty to conform with the poll results," and amendments were introduced "just before the Senate ratified the first of two treaties, on March 16, 1978."

It is true that Baker played a courageous and important part in the approval process. But here, in summary fashion, is what actually happened:

Shortly after the treaty signing on September 7, 1977, Majority Leader Byrd said that if the Senate approved the treaties it would be only after some changes and clarifications. There were two particularly troublesome questions: the rights of the United States to defend and guarantee access to the Canal, and expeditious passage for U.S. military vessels. Byrd, Baker, and others discussed these with the White House on October 11. On October 14, President Carter and General Torrijos issued a Statement of Understanding (the wording of which was cleared in advance with Byrd) aimed at clarifying these points.

In November, Byrd led a delegation of Democratic senators to Panama, and during the visit Torrijos reaffirmed Panama's adherence to the Statement of Understanding.

Before the end of 1977, a strategy had been devised to incorporate the statement into the treaties in such a way as to satisfy Senate concerns without jeopardizing the treaties. Robert Dockery, of the Foreign Relations Committee staff and the staff of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, working with Byrd, developed the strategy. Byrd informed Carter of his intention and Baker expressed his willingness to join the effort, viewing it as critical to passage. In January, Baker made his Panama trip and explained the strategy to Torrijos. On January 13, Byrd formally announced his support for the treaties, adding, "I have on a number of occasions stated that the substance of the October 14 statement

should be added to or incorporated in the treaties. . . . I plan to work with other senators in seeing that such language is included."

Normally the Foreign Relations Committee would have reported the treaty with whatever amendments or reservations its members thought appropriate. However, Byrd got the committee leaders to agree that all senators would be given the opportunity to cosponsor the Byrd-Baker "leadership" amendments. Thus, senators were able to put their names on amendments that improved the treaties and affirmed U.S. rights. On February 7, the day before Senate debate began, Byrd introduced the amendments on behalf of himself, Baker, and seventy-six others. The two amendments were approved on March 10 and 13 and the Neutrality Treaty approved March 16.

Much more could be said about events and strategy, as well as the courageous actions that made Senate passage possible. But the point is that the significance Christian attaches to Baker's poll is misplaced; it was of minimal importance in comparison with other developments. It wasn't Baker's "plan." True, Baker was a key figure in building Senate support. But he did not formulate the strategy.

HOYT PURVIS
Policy adviser to
Majority Leader Byrd, 1977-1980
Fayetteville, Ark.

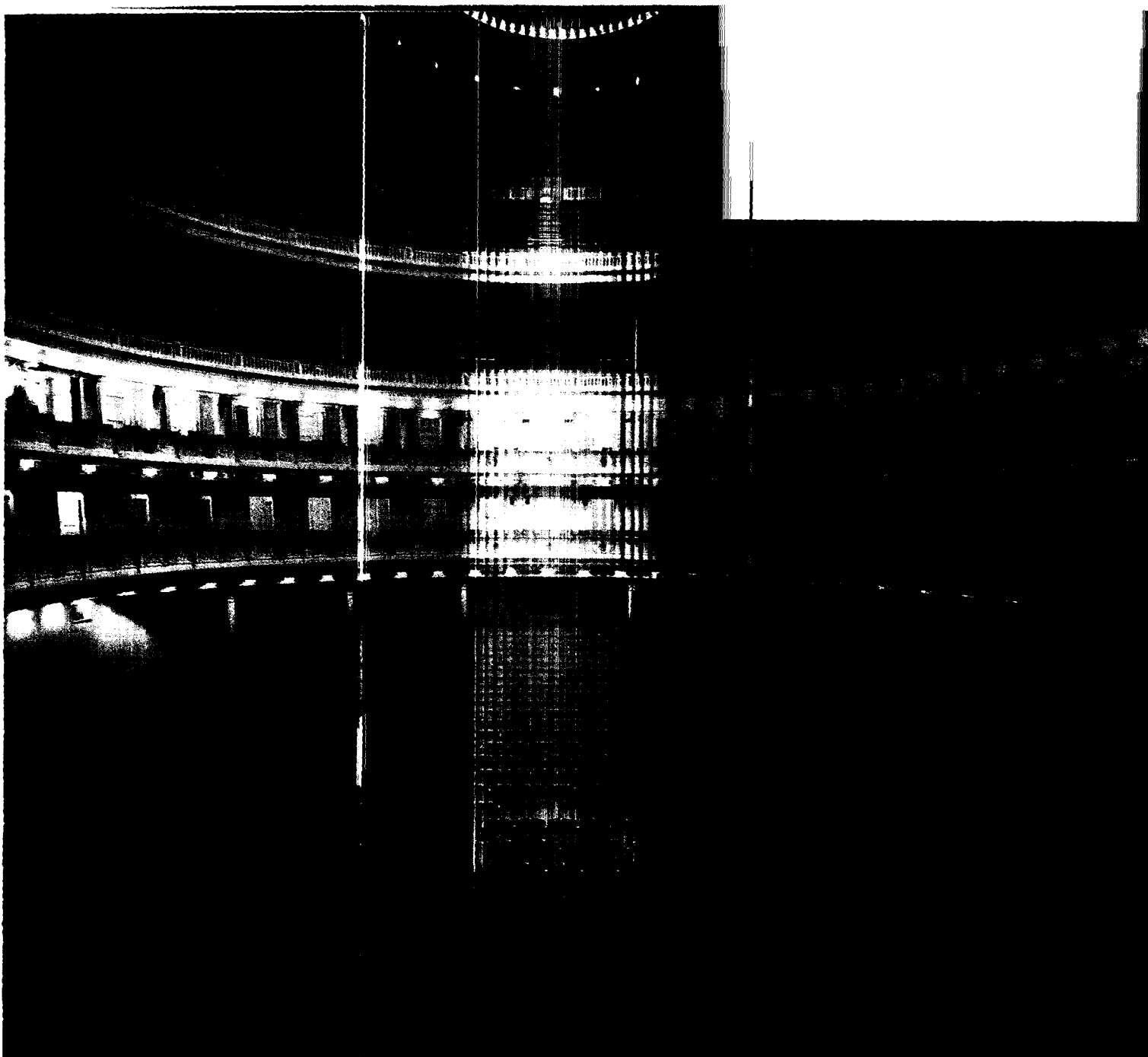
Shirley Christian replies:

I think Mr. Purvis is attaching more than reasonable weight to his particular piece of the strategy, in suggesting that the Senate Democratic leadership and staff had things planned all along. If this were so, then I can't imagine why everyone was holding his breath about the outcome. Senator Baker's poll was certainly important to Baker's position, which is what I was discussing. Furthermore, whatever the Democratic leadership may have had in mind, only a pivotal Republican could have convinced General Torrijos that the problem of finding votes was real.

MALLED BY CRITICISM

I enjoyed the lists by Roy Blount, Jr., in your July issue, but

1. A writer of his stature should know the difference between "precipitously" and "precipitately"



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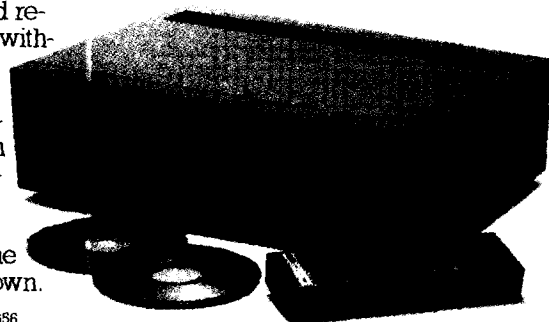
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2. A magazine, etc., etc., . . . ditto

Yours very truly,

FRANCETTE MACMINN
Victoria, B.C.

Roy Blount, Jr., replies:

1. Mrs. MacMinn, you cannot know how it makes a writer of my stature feel to find himself continuously decimated, day end day out, by a highly unique gauntlet of pressures:
 - a. Stooping under lentils
 - b. Literally malled by criticism
 - c. Getting every little miniscule verbalism just so
 - d. Struggling to infer what readers will imply
 - 1) And visa-versa
 - 2) Leave alone *pari passu*
2. All that besides, I evince that what you indeed seek to betoken is "a writer of his [my] statute"
 - a. If so, it is not a statute but an ordinance
 - b. At any means it is not, probably speaking, "mine"
 - 1) To be certain, I was perhaps the most deeply concerted literatus who pushed through it's passing
 - 2) But I was centered around by numerable other culturale big-bobs
 - a) Melvin Bellow
 - b) Saul Belli
 - c) William Miller
 - d) The latter's cohort, Arthur Styron
 - c. The ordinance decries that indiscrete knip picking of the word of a writer over 5'9" is
 - 1) A misdemeanor, if said word be comprised of less than four syllabus
 - 2) A felony, if four or greater
 - d. Irregardless, I do not attend to evoke legal precedings, good will being more sensual to me than cher punctuality
3. Or do you aver to my statue?
 - a. I am pleased to connote that you have viewed it
 - b. Are you perceptible of the principal concerned in none of my horse's trotters touching the ground?
4. That is a nice name—Mrs. Francette MacMinn

JAMAICA EXPERIMENT

Michael Massing, in "The Jamaica Experiment" (September *Atlantic*), concludes, "Far from demonstrating

the superiority of the marketplace, Seaga's term has shown just how damaging such a conviction can be. . . . [Jamaica] also requires an activist state willing to undertake considerable regulation and public ownership."

While Edward Seaga may be no more successful than Michael Manley was in building up Jamaica's economy, Mr. Massing's conclusions do not flow from the information he presents. Clearly, the popularity of the current Jamaica Labour Party government has been damaged (perhaps fatally) by several politically astute "free-market" actions—decontrol of rents and agricultural imports. But what long-term gains Jamaica's economy might have experienced from these and Seaga's few other free-market initiatives will probably never be known. For, as Mr. Massing points out, one and a half to two years of "capitalism" has been followed swiftly by reversals on most fronts—reimposed rent controls, new public housing, agricultural import restrictions, etc.

Perhaps even more to the point, Seaga's capitalistic revival has been more bark than bite—"only a handful of trifling [nationalized] enterprises [have been divested]." "Seaga made it clear that he had no intention of selling off the public utilities Manley had nationalized." One public enterprise—electrical power—seems to figure mightily as an economic handicap, evidently preventing both agricultural and industrial growth.

In fact, Seaga has continued to expand the state's role—nationalizing the Esso refinery, starting new public-aid programs, etc. The article reports a Jamaican as saying, "There's no doubt that Seaga's commitment is to state capitalism and regulation of the economy." This hardly seems a description of a free-market Moses.

GEOFF LOCANDER
Chicago, Ill.

Michael Massing replies:

No matter how much evidence is amassed to show the impracticality of radical free-market capitalism, purists will continue to assert that its failure is due to a lack of nerve by such renegades as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Edward Seaga. If nothing else, my article sought to show that simple formulas like the free market are inadequate when confronted with the complexity of the real world, whether First, Second, or Third.

LATIN LESSON

To quibble about a quibble may be carrying pedantry a little far, but as a Latinist, I must point out that in "Upward Mobility: How to Be an X" (October *Atlantic*) Wilfrid Sheed's correction of Paul Fussell's howler (*in suburbiam* for "in the suburbs") also needs correction.

If *suburbia* is to be taken as a neuter plural (on the analogy of *media*), then the correct rendering would be *in suburbiis* (as in *in mediis rebus*). But Mr. Sheed's *in suburbibus*—a feminine plural—would have seemed less barbaric to Roman suburbanites such as Vergil and Horace.

ANTHONY MANOUSOS
Northfield, Minn.

Wilfrid Sheed replies:
Peccavi.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

I'd like to respond, belatedly, to the thoughtful letters to the editor (regarding my article "Demographics: An Epidemic of Publicity," July *Atlantic*) from Vern L. Bullough and from Michael P. Rafferty, M.D./Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., published in the November *Atlantic*. The letters offer opposing explanations and interpretations of the current figures on teenage births. Bullough suggests that "the main reason for the decline in teenage pregnancy is the rising age of women at marriage," while Rafferty and Toomey state that "the birth-rate among unmarried teenagers rose from 16 to 25 per thousand (a 56 percent increase)." While I generally agree with Bullough, I must add that a change in the marriage age is but one of many influences on births to teenagers. My answer to both correspondents is this: Pregnant teenagers no longer feel compelled to "legitimize" their pregnancies by getting married.

Rafferty and Toomey interpret this trend to remain unwed as an increase in births to teenagers, whereas it is actually only a decrease in marriages. "The dramatic rise in illegitimate births to teenagers has not occurred because of more out-of-wedlock conceptions, but because fewer out-of-wedlock conceptions lead to marriage. This means our search for explanations of the increase in numbers of illegitimate births should

center on changing teenage behavior with regard to marriage." (Wendy H. Baldwin in *Adolescent Pregnancy and Childbearing—Growing Concerns for Americans*, Population Bulletin, Vol. 31, No. 2., Population Reference Bureau, Inc., Washington, D.C.)

Rafferty and Toomey seem to imply that teenage pregnancy is problematic only for those who remain unmarried, whereas teenage couples who marry because of a pregnancy are, like unmarried teenage mothers, at high risk for a variety of serious health and socio-economic problems, including the failure to complete their schooling; severely reduced earnings and participation in the labor force; dependence on their families and on welfare; divorce; suicide; child abuse. Clearly, marriage does not resolve the problems of teenage pregnancy. The issue, then, is not marital status but teenagers' unplanned and most often unwanted pregnancies.

JO ANN S. PUTNAM-SCHOLES

DEFENDING THOMAS WOLFE

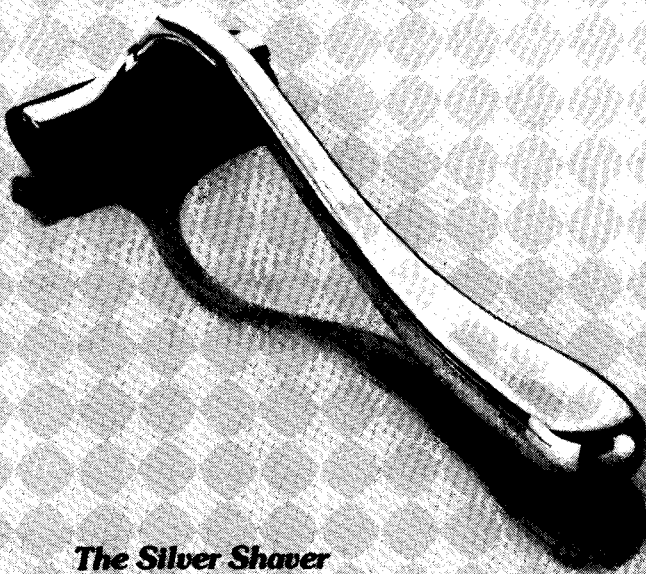
The little essay by James Atlas ("Papa Lives," October *Atlantic*) was good, but his estimate of Thomas Wolfe as "no longer readable" strikes this reader as false, unjust, and all too conventional. False because thousands of people, here and abroad, still read Wolfe every year, year after year, forty-five years after his death. His books stay in print. This happens despite the fact that Wolfe receives no support from the academics—unlike Fitzgerald, for example, who "still holds up" because he is held up by institutional inertia.

The judgment is unjust because it implies that Wolfe is no longer worth reading. In fact no other modern American writer has given us so deep, rich, detailed, human, and humane a sense of the texture and quality of American life in the first thirty-five years of this century. He was, as Faulkner once said, somewhere, "the best of us all."

EDWARD ABBEY
Oracle, Ariz.

James Atlas replies:

I would refer Mr. Abbey to my re-evaluation of Wolfe in The New York Times Book Review of December 2, 1979, in which I came to the conclusion that although Wolfe is no longer readable, he is still avidly read.



The Silver Shaver

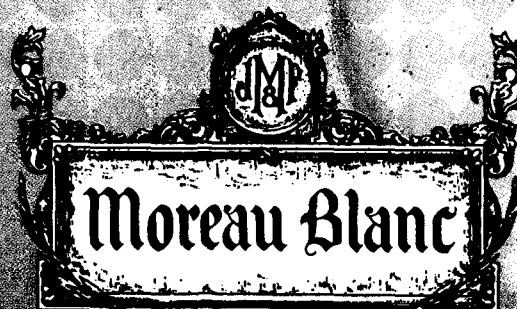
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REPORTS & COMMENT

FINLAND COMPLICATED COEXISTENCE

*"Finlandization" has become an epithet,
but the Finns have remained
remarkably free while reaching
accommodation with the Russians*



NOT MANY COUNTRIES have acquired the status of metaphor. But Finland has—or, at least, had: in truth, "Finlandization" has been less a metaphor than an epithet, used by people who knew little about Finland to describe policies they disliked. The eminent German political scientist Richard Löwenthal is generally credited with having invented the term in the early 1960s, but there is little agreement on what it means, since the purposes of those who have used it have been more polemical than analytical.

If the term means anything, it means a state's anticipatory accommodation to the interests of a powerful state nearby—in the case of Finland, the Soviet Union. The rub, of course, is that weak states inevitably have to make some accommodation to strong states in their neighborhood, like it or not. One man's realpolitik is another man's trimming sails to the Soviet wind. To complicate matters, writers such as Walter Laqueur began talking in the mid-seventies of "self-Finlandization," a term picked up by Zbigniew Brzezinski when he was President Carter's assistant for national-security affairs. For Brzezinski, the target of the epithet was Western Europe, especially West Germany under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. But the term is

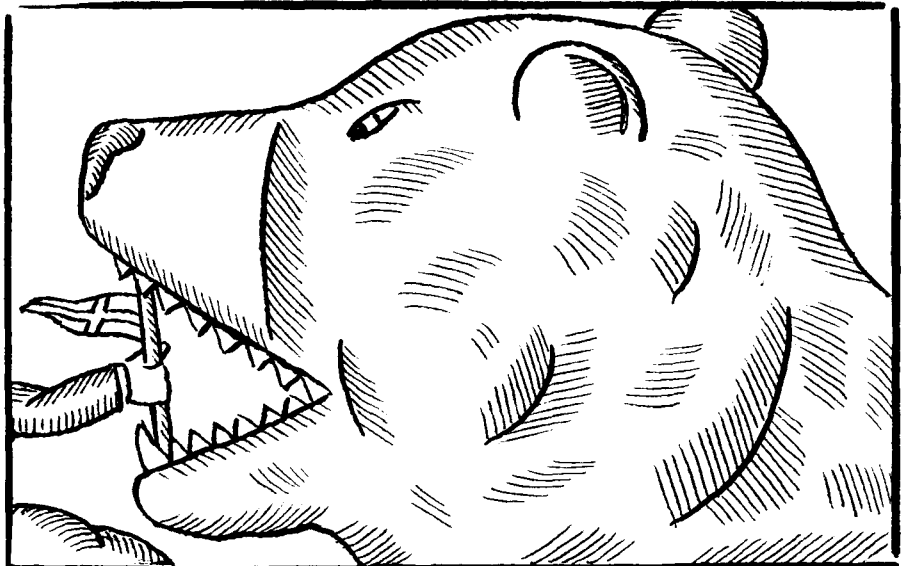
at best redundant, because any notion of Finlandization implies anticipation by the weak state more than actual coercion by the strong.

Charges of Finlandization have been hurled across the Atlantic less frequently in the past several years. The accession to power in West Germany of the Christian Democrats, under Helmut Kohl, has been reassuring to official Washington, at least temporarily. But more important, the issues facing the United States and its allies in Western Europe—the intermediate-nuclear-force deployments, for example—are so serious that gratuitous name-calling has become too damaging to contemplate. Nevertheless, it seems worth looking at how "Finlandization" applies to the country itself. The occasion for my recent visit was a conference in Helsinki on nuclear weapons and Nordic security, especially the prospects for a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic area.

The end of President Urho Kekkonen's

long (1956 to 1981) tenure in office has not meant a change in Finnish policy toward the Soviet Union. His successor, Mauno Koivisto, was quick to identify himself with the postwar policy developed under Finland's two previous presidents—the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen line. Although the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) still had five years to run, at a Moscow summit last June Koivisto and Yuri Andropov extended it by twenty years, in large part to commit themselves personally to it. Koivisto, a Social Democrat, had not been regarded as the Soviets' favorite candidate. Nevertheless, he has pledged to continue the intense diplomacy with Soviet leaders that Kekkonen made a tradition.

Accommodating the Soviet Union has allowed the Finns a surprising amount of internal discretion. The country has a stable parliamentary democracy and a free press. Eighty percent of its econo-





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THE ONE TO WATCH

my is privately owned, a much higher figure than those for many nations in Western Europe. Its per capita income is well into the world's top twenty. Finland shows very few signs of Soviet cultural influence, but has trappings of the West—Scotch, jeans, and Burger King. It bears almost no resemblance to an Eastern European state. It is perhaps unsurprising that few Finns oppose existing arrangements with the Soviet Union. A 1974 poll, for example, found that 80 percent of Finns thought the Soviet-Finnish friendship treaty was favorable to their international position, and only 4 percent thought it was unfavorable.

Yet the approval derives from a shared awareness of how few options Finland has and the memory of the consequences of other attitudes. Most Finns regard Finland's near-arrogance toward the Soviet Union between the world wars as a grave error, one for which they paid dearly, both in the Winter War of 1939–1940 and in the so-called “continuation war” of 1941–1944. In the armistice ending the latter, Finland lost parts of its eastern region, Karelia, a loss that entailed the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of refugees. As one Finnish analyst put it to me years ago: You have to understand, we tried fighting them and we lost; you can't blame us for trying some other approach.

SOME OF THE costs of Finland's peculiar ties to Moscow are plain enough. Despite its need, Finland refused Marshall Plan aid after Moscow signaled that accepting would be considered a hostile act. Finland's arrangements with the Common Market are balanced by parallel links to Comecon—which were made largely for cosmetic reasons—and its policy of neutrality rules out full membership in the Common Market. Political refugees from the East are normally returned. The FCMA treaty obliges Finland to cooperate with Moscow if the Soviet Union is attacked through Finland, though the Finnish interpretation holds that mutual consent would be required for Soviet troops to enter Finland. There are treaty limits on Finnish military forces. Although those forces are well trained and some are deployed in the north, they are inadequate to defend the Soviet border. Finland spends on defense less than half the percentage of GNP spent on it by Sweden or Norway. Finland buys major arms from the



Soviet Union, though many of its Soviet items, such as aircraft, have been modified with Western electronics. Large purchases from the West, such as the recent acquisition of American anti-tank missiles, are balanced by comparable purchases from the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union provides virtually all of Finland's oil and natural gas, and two thirds of its total energy. Before the energy crisis of 1973, Finland was able to keep its trade with the Soviet Union at its target of one fifth of all trade, but that share has since risen: exports to the Soviet Union, primarily of manufactured goods, reached 27 percent of total trade in 1982, with imports from the Soviet Union, mostly of raw materials, at 25 percent. Since the trade is conducted on a kind of barter basis, Finland's large “surplus” with the Soviet Union means that it must either sell less or look for more to import. There is no question, however, that Finns regard the trade arrangements as beneficial. Though the Finns look to a recovery in the West to reduce their reliance on trade with the Soviet Union, that trade has cushioned the impact of the global recession on Finland.

The marks of deference to the Soviet Union on Finland's politics and public life are harder to find. Certainly *Pravda* and *Izvestia* do not refrain from expressing opinions about Finnish politics, and Finnish analysts are devoted Kremlinologists, seeking tiny clues to Soviet attitudes. To exert influence on Finnish politics, the Soviets use the pro-Soviet faction of the Finnish Communist Party, which has frequently been part of post-war coalition governments. (In practice,

however, Communists are excluded from the diplomatic service and the officer corps.)

In 1973, the Finnish parliament extended President Kekkonen's term by four years, and two years later all political parties announced that they would support him in 1978. Both actions reflected Finnish sensitivity to Soviet indications that better relations between Finland and Western Europe would be acceptable only if a firm hand remained on the rudder—leading one observer to call Finland “Kekkoslovakia.” Yet in the 1982 elections the candidate preferred by the Soviets was rejected by Kekkonen's own Center Party, despite signals from *Pravda*. The ultimate winner, Koivisto, is a man without strong ties to the Soviet Union—a lack that was interpreted as contributing to his victory.

Self-restraint sometimes borders on self-censorship. Kekkonen successfully pressured Finnish publishers not to issue a local edition of *Gulag Archipelago*—though a Finnish translation was published in Sweden and distributed in Finland. Finnish leaders seldom criticize the Soviet Union, especially about “domestic” matters like human rights (they seldom criticize the U.S., either), and the press follows suit. The silence reflects the wide consensus, in and out of government, that existing arrangements ought not to be jeopardized. Thus, while the Finnish trade surplus with the Soviet Union will be noted, it will be played down, lest it be embarrassing to Moscow and complicate future trade negotiations. One government source says that in discussions of the communiqué to accompany the prolongation of the bilateral treaty in June, the Soviets pressed for stronger language concerning the Finnish media. Finland resisted, the source says, holding to a vague formulation acknowledging the “responsibility” of the press not to provoke tensions.

Many of Finland's current problems are shared by other industrial countries. Economic growth will be slight this year, unemployment remains high, and inflation, at 9 percent last year, threatens to gain momentum. A previously impressive growth in exports—led by metal and engineering goods, which had come to equal exports of traditional wood products—halted in 1982, despite the increased trade with the Soviet Union. Growing government deficits are not yet a problem on the scale of that in the U.S., but they will nevertheless compel

unpleasant and politically divisive cut-backs in social spending.

More important over the long term, there are signs of cracks in Finland's remarkable political and social consensus. With four operating nuclear reactors, (two supplied by the Soviet Union), Finland has managed to produce a high proportion of its domestic electricity from nuclear energy. There is growing opposition to a plan for a fifth reactor, which is nonetheless attractive to Finnish industry: buying another big-ticket item from the East means selling more back. Most politicians I spoke to predicted that the reactor will never be bought. Finnish "Greens" (radicals, environmentalists, and anti-nuclear activists) captured two seats in parliamentary elections this year. The Greens are beginning to have effects on internal politics—especially on the previously impressive unity of the Social Democrats—that are reminiscent of dissension in West Germany, one right-wing Finnish Social Democrat explained to me. Some of his colleagues, he said, are tempted to try to co-opt support for the Greens by moving left on issues like nuclear power and budget-cutting.

THE CONFERENCE ON a Nordic nuclear-free zone was a good chance to observe Finland's internal politics and its relations with neighbors. The conference commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the proposal for the zone, which was supported by Kekkonen in 1958. It is not a very good idea. The Nordic countries already constitute a de facto nuclear-free zone, since Sweden and Finland have forsworn nuclear weapons, and the Nordic NATO members, Norway and Denmark, do not permit them to be stationed within their boundaries in peacetime. The Nordic region is adjacent to the Kola peninsula, which is the base for an enormous array of Soviet conventional and nuclear weapons, including a large fraction of the Soviet nuclear-missile-carrying submarine fleet. The Nordics hope and trust that the missiles are intended to go over their heads to the United States. Still, it would be hard to pretend that they did not exist during any negotiations over a nuclear-free zone. The Soviets, who are quite content with the idea of a nuclear-free zone that does not include them, have hinted that they might make concessions to accommodate one. These would probably mean some constraints



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on shorter-range systems on the Kola. But even given Soviet concessions, there would remain great problems in defining and negotiating a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic region. Merely ratifying the existing state of affairs would gain the Nordics little, and doing so would be awkward for Norway and Denmark, because it would separate them still further from NATO's nuclear umbrella.

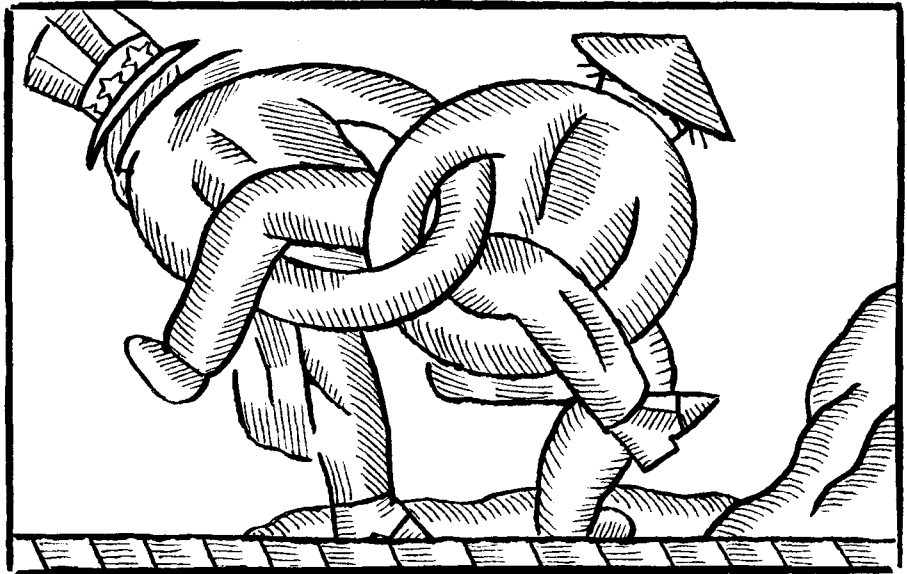
Yet not all ideas are useful primarily for their substance. I sensed that many Nordics who support the idea while it is under discussion would not like to see it become a reality, for the reasons suggested above. Discussing the nuclear-free zone has increased consultation among the Nordic countries on security matters—indeed, at the conference I sometimes felt as if I were listening through a keyhole to a private discussion. One Finnish political scientist could not resist the temptation to play to the Soviet gallery, by suggesting that the Soviet-Finnish friendship treaty could serve as a model for a nuclear-free-zone agreement. He embarrassed most of his Finnish colleagues, but it is helpful to Finland to keep the idea alive.

The best capsule description of Finland's attitude toward the Soviet Union that I have heard was provided by a foreign diplomat: It's not courageous but it's effective. And, Finns would add, the costs of courage are too high for a country of 4.8 million people. Maybe, one Finn said, we will be able to afford other options when the Soviet Union disintegrates into fifteen semi-independent republics, but we can't now.

Finlandization has little value as a metaphor. Finland derives impressive benefits even as it incurs costs. Its approach is the product of too many singular facts; bedfellows make peculiar politics. If Finland as a model has any relevance, it is not to the West but to the East. Turmoil in Eastern Europe may one day force Moscow to contemplate giving the nations there something like Finland's autonomy in domestic, economic, and political affairs—provided they show special deference to Soviet security needs. No doubt Eastern Europe would be more than happy to be Finlandized in that way.

—Gregory F. Treverton

Gregory F. Treverton, who is on the faculty of the Kennedy School of Government, is at work on a book about European-American relations.



SOUTH KOREA OLD ALLY, NEW COMPETITOR

Now, when South Korea's economic success is costing the jobs of Americans, South Koreans wonder if we would fight for them again



WHAT WITH TRAFFIC jams and checkpoints, the twenty-five-mile bus ride north from Seoul to the demilitarized zone dividing the two Koreas takes almost two hours, and so the suspense builds along the way. As the villages grow farther apart and the rice fields start to sprout concrete tank traps, you know you're getting close to the DMZ; when you cross Freedom Bridge and see Camp Liberty Bell, you know you're there. It is like a journey in a time machine, back to an era and a place where the Cold War was once hot. It threatened to heat up again, in the aftermath of the October bomb blast in Rangoon, Burma, that killed seventeen South Korean high officials and which the South Koreans believe was perpetrated by North Korean agents.

A visit to the DMZ has two stages, one Korean and one American. Off in a remote, barren corner of the zone, it is the South Koreans' job to dramatize the continuing threat from the North. Korean soldiers take away all cameras and umbrellas and pass out dark-brown military helmets. Then they lead your group on a long underground journey. The first tunnel,

built by the South Koreans, slopes sharply down; it comes complete with floor mats, handrails, and even alcoves for those who need to rest along the way. It leads, eventually, to a deep subterranean passage constructed by the North Koreans, rough-hewn but wide enough (say the South Koreans) to send a 10,000-strong mechanized division of northern soldiers through in a day. Blasting through solid rock, the North Koreans penetrated far under the southern half of the DMZ before this particular tunnel was detected, in the mid-1970s. Several similar tunnels have since been discovered, and, according to one North Korean defector, there are perhaps dozens more. No one in the South knows exactly where the others are.

Bizarre as a surprise attack by blasting cap and bulldozer might seem, the South Koreans are taking no chances. In the midst of the tunnel, a few hundred meters from the underground frontier, a lone soldier keeps guard behind barbed wire, sandbags, and a mounted machine gun. Anchored in the rock above his shoulder is a cage containing a white songbird; if it stops singing, that could mean that nerve gas is on its way through the tunnel.

A few miles away, over the hills, lie the Joint Security Area and the "truce village" of Panmunjom, where the combatants in the Korean War go through a charade of routine negotiations that consists mainly of exchanging insults. (A typical issue in dispute is whether one side's flag can be higher than the other's on the conference table.) In the bustling area just south of the actual military demarcation line, the United Nations Com-

mand—the official rubric for the American forces at the DMZ—conducts a well-rehearsed show for visitors. The strapping American GIs assigned to this precarious forward camp are specially selected, and some serve as full-time tour guides. They give a quick history of the war, run through a slide show, and point out some of the landmarks—for example, the Bridge of No Return, used on such occasions as the release, in December, 1968, of the crew of the spy ship *USS Pueblo*, which had been captured by the North Koreans eleven months earlier. Another locus of DMZ lore is the poplar stump at the site of the 1976 “tree-cutting incident,” in which North Korean troops, wielding axes, attacked and killed two American officers and wounded nine American and South Korean soldiers who were trying to prune a tree.

Just last year a member of the elite American unit assigned to the Joint Security Area, twenty-year-old Pfc. Joseph T. White, of South St. Louis, Missouri, lured by North Korean propaganda, crossed to the other side of the 38th parallel. His defection, the first such incident since 1965, was a great embarrassment, and now White's voice can be heard occasionally on the North Korean broadcasts that fill the air in the DMZ. Most of the time those broadcasts consist of a haunting, high-pitched wail, a woman's voice that alternately sings and harangues in praise of the Communist paradise.

The DMZ is a symbol of how little genuine progress has been made in cooling tensions between the two Koreas during the past thirty years. It is a place where it is easy to imagine war breaking out at any moment. That is why in South Korea speculations about American will and military strategy are a matter of everyday conversation and why they take on much greater urgency than they do in the United States, where they can be comfortably abstract. In Korea the questions are concrete and alarmingly immediate: “Will the United States save us next time?” and “Is Washington willing to push the nuclear button, if that is what it takes?”

Such questions are enough to shock Americans, still recovering from Vietnam and lately worried over deepening military involvements in Central America and Lebanon. Not many Americans would be willing to fight another war over Korea—especially given the repu-



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tation of the current South Korean regime. The South Koreans realize this, and though the shooting down of a Korean civilian jet liner by the Soviet Union in September has no doubt temporarily strengthened Korean-American ties, South Koreans will continue to be haunted by uncertainty over America's post-Vietnam resolve. This anxiety is only one of many problems now straining an alliance that has been at the center of U.S. foreign policy, if sometimes quietly so, for more than three decades.

MOST AMERICANS PROBABLY know very little about Korea. Those above a certain age may remember it as the scene of an ugly postscript to World War II in which an uncle or cousin was called up, or recalled, to fight. Younger people, if they learned anything at all about the Korean peninsula, rushed past it toward the end of a high school history course; still younger ones may wind up confusing it with Vietnam, 1,500 miles and many cultures to the southwest.

More than 60 percent of all South Koreans were born after the end of the Korean War, but, in contrast to their American peers, they have had an education in which the Korean-American connection is central; by now, it is deeply imbedded in their consciousness.

Having served as a battleground for the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, the Confucian monarchy of Korea became a protectorate of Japan in 1905, and five years later was completely absorbed as a Japanese colony. The brutal Japanese occupation ended only in 1945, with Japan's defeat in the Pacific War. The Allies had agreed at wartime conferences that Korea should be free of the Japanese, but the transition to independence proved complicated. As elsewhere, the United States and the Soviet Union shared the postwar occupation duties (the country being divided, in this case, along an arbitrary line on the map suggested by two young American lieutenant colonels, one of them Dean Rusk, later secretary of state), and totally different regimes emerged under the influence of the two great powers. Kim Il Sung, a young man who had served in the Soviet Army, was installed by the Kremlin at the head of a government in the North, where Korea shares a short stretch of border with the USSR. In the South an elderly Princeton graduate named Syngman Rhee emerged as the leader. Both men talked of unifying the

country, but their frames of reference were so different as to be irreconcilable. By 1948, Korea had become two separate countries, implacably hostile to each other.

There is still dispute in some circles over just how the Korean War began, but the version generally accepted in the West (and the one regarded as gospel in South Korea) is that on June 25, 1950, the People's Army of North Korea launched a surprise attack across the 38th parallel. Despite Rhee's earlier aggressive talk, such as a boast that the southern forces "could take Pyongyang [the northern capital] in three days," it was Seoul that fell within three days.

The United States reacted not only with shock but also with some degree of guilt. Earlier, worried by the chaos of Korean politics and put off by Rhee, Washington had denied the South Koreans tanks and other heavy weapons; and at a crucial moment in 1950, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had given a speech defining vital American interests in a way that seemed to exclude Korea. Within five days of the North Korean invasion, President Harry S. Truman contradicted that definition and committed the war-weary American nation to what would become a symbolic struggle against communism. The troops that came to South Korea's aid fought under the flag of the United Nations (and included soldiers from Europe, Asia, and Africa), but most of them were American. In a risky but brilliant piece of strategy, General Douglas MacArthur turned to sea and air power to make up for disastrous losses on the ground; his landing at Inchon surprised the North Koreans behind their own lines, and within a few months he had liberated Seoul and returned it to Rhee.

Unfortunately, MacArthur soon fell for Rhee's dream of reuniting Korea by force, and his drive north turned into a debacle when, on November 26, hundreds of thousands of Chinese troops entered the war on North Korea's side. The rest of the struggle was full of disasters—including MacArthur's unseemly public squabbles with Truman over whether to strike back at Chinese targets with nuclear weapons. There ensued a long, withering war of attrition, ending with an armistice that took two years to negotiate and only confirmed the division of Korea into two enemy states, which had about the same boundaries as when the war began.

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THIRTY YEARS LATER, South Koreans from all walks of life continue to express their gratitude to visiting Americans. "We're still free and still Korean because of American sacrifices," says one official; "your people came here and died for a principle." South Koreans offer gifts and extend to Americans courtesies that go far beyond what even their Oriental culture would normally require. And they regard the 39,000 U.S. troops stationed in their country—who cost the American taxpayers \$1.4 billion a year—as a crucial insurance policy.

There is a fundamental asymmetry in the relationship, of course, the United States being far more important to South Korea than South Korea can ever be to the United States. But the American interest is still strong and clear. Korea is a strategically significant peninsula, located in a part of the world where great-power rivalry is acute. If the Soviet Union or North Korea controlled the entire peninsula, then Japan, at its closest point only thirty-five miles away, would also be threatened. The presence of American forces in South Korea makes it easier for the United States to defend Japan in the event of a sea embargo or an air attack, and to influence the outcome of, or perhaps even prevent, any other conflict in East Asia.

But South Korea has also become important to the United States in its own right. The annual trade between the two countries now totals about \$12 billion, with a roughly equal balance in the flow, and U.S. investment is growing. South Korea is an established market for American goods, and although U.S. labor unions lament the loss of American jobs, American consumers benefit from the availability of generally high-quality Korean products at relatively low prices. The friendship of the South Korean government is increasingly a mixed blessing, but Washington has gained over time from Seoul's political affinity with the United States. Certainly it has been an advantage for American policy-makers in recent years to know that Japan, South Korea, and even, at times, China, whatever differences they may have among themselves, regard the United States as a common friend.

Ironically, South Korea matters more to the United States today than it did at the time of the Korean War—all the more reason to sustain a commitment that has cost the U.S. billions of dollars in aid and more than 33,000 lives.

KOREA WAS IN ruins after the war, one of the most destructive conflicts in modern history. Both North and South had suffered enormous numbers of casualties—at least a million dead on each side—and their economic and social systems had collapsed. Having changed hands several times in the course of the fighting, Seoul was devastated; many of its buildings were empty and much of its population had to beg food from American forces in order to avoid starvation. Overall, more than half of South Korea's industry had been destroyed, and the per capita annual income south of the DMZ was a mere \$134.

The U.S. Congress, which included Korean War veterans and veterans' relatives and friends, took a generous view of the need to rebuild a country that owed its survival to the United States and that did not mind saying so. As a result, South Korea received vast amounts of American aid (as well as some supplements from other countries), for economic reconstruction and for the creation of a strong, enduring military machine. The hope was that South Korea would become a new model for the Third World, refuting Marxist rhetoric by demonstrating that development could occur successfully along free-enterprise lines. The American business community became enthusiastic about Korea too, convinced that there would be benefits for all concerned.

South Korea has succeeded economically beyond its sponsors' most ambitious dreams, to the point where its success has complicated its standing with its friends. American veterans of the Korean War would scarcely recognize the place. Development began to take off in the early 1960s, and several five-year plans later the nation has outgrown the "developing" category and (along with Brazil, Taiwan, and Singapore) is a prototype of the "newly industrialized countries." Indeed, South Korea has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with an annual per capita income approaching \$1,700. The latest projection from the Korea Development Institute is that the country's gross national product will have increased by a remarkable 8.1 percent in 1983.

The boom has been fueled by the South Korean government's encouragement and funding of heavy industry, which has helped the country compete, often on cutthroat terms, in international trade. In sectors like textiles, South

Korea has been a runaway success, taking its toll not only in such obvious places as the United States and Great Britain but also in Japan, where perhaps a third of the jobs in textiles have been lost to "cheap imports" from Korea and Taiwan. But the most daunting challenge to other economies comes from the gigantic new South Korean conglomerates, monolithic enterprises that do business around the world virtually free of domestic regulation and restriction.

The biggest is the Hyundai Group (*hyundai* is Korean for "modern"). It makes cars, locomotives, and offshore oil-drilling platforms; it manufactures paints, cement, and wooden building materials; it designs highways, railroads, and bridges; and it claims to run the largest shipyard in the world. Hyundai is the creation of Chung Ju Yung, a modern-day Korean folk hero who walked 150 miles to Seoul from his native village at the age of sixteen to take his first job as a day laborer. Now sixty-seven, Chung has 135,000 employees and a privately held business empire that extends to forty-two overseas offices, located everywhere from Seattle to Sydney, from Bogotá to Baghdad.

Hyundai's base of operations is in Ulsan, on Korea's southeastern coast. Ulsan might be described more accurately as a company province than as a company town. The shipbuilding division has already turned out 260 ships, including many supertankers. Hyundai has also built thousands of apartments and hundreds of houses (which are rented or sold to employees at below-market rates), not to mention primary and secondary schools, a technical college, and an arena for the practice of the martial art of Tae Kwon Do. With little reason to go anywhere else, Hyundai employees act out the Korean work ethic, putting in six-day weeks and taking annual vacations restricted to three days and four nights.

South Korea's new prosperity has been accompanied by a phenomenal growth in its population. Some 40 million people now live in a country the size of Indiana. That works out to about 1,000 people per square mile, the highest population density on earth. (If the United States were as densely populated, it would have 3.8 billion people.) Government officials, finally alarmed over the problem, are scrambling to find ways to persuade couples to have only one or two children.

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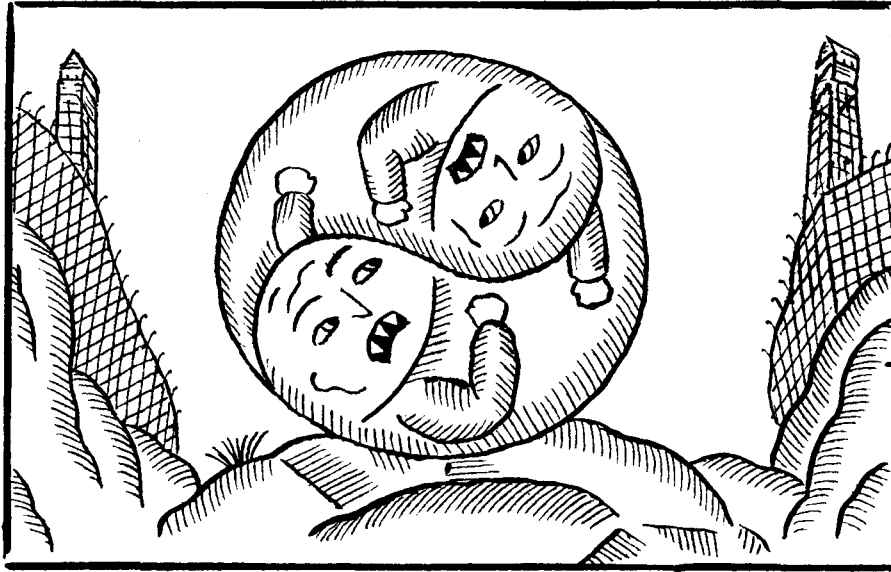
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ent than in Seoul, which has become one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of 9 million and a density of 36,000 people per square mile (in comparison, New York City has 23,000 people per square mile). A workshop of chaotic, virtually unregulated growth, Seoul is a sprawling metropolis. There is new construction on almost every block, the din of traffic is never out of earshot, the air is astonishingly polluted, and the business climate is so overheated that Koreans and their would-be partners from all over the Western world can be seen and heard cutting deals everywhere—on street corners, in hotel corridors and elevators, in taxicabs—at any hour of the day or night.

American influence is ubiquitous. South Korean disc jockeys play rock music and American movie themes on their radio programs. In the commercial portrait galleries in Seoul's underground arcades, the subjects include Douglas MacArthur, Lyndon Johnson, Bing Crosby, and Brooke Shields, but not Harry Truman (who, after all, stopped MacArthur from seeking a real victory in the war) or Jimmy Carter (who tried to withdraw some American troops from South Korea in the late 1970s). Ronald Reagan, who as a candidate and as President has said all the right things about Korea, and who is locally a favorite movie star to boot, is, of course, a best seller.

South Korean intellectuals and technocrats still regard the United States as the place to go for higher education. There are 300 U.S.-trained Ph.D.s in the army alone, and every other area of government and business has been thoroughly penetrated by people who have

studied or worked, or both, in America. One result has been to create South Korean institutions and bureaucracies that are almost clones of their American counterparts. Indeed, South Korea today is in many respects a caricature of the United States.

THE AMERICANS WHO have helped shape the new South Korea are gratified, even flattered, by the country's emergence as a full-fledged actor on the world scene and by its growing economic prowess. But when the student becomes smarter and more adept than the teacher, there is bound to be some trouble.

The temptation for South Korea to flaunt its economic success is understandable, if sometimes unwise from a public-relations standpoint. The Daewoo Corporation, one of Hyundai's major competitors, bought five pages of advertising in a recent issue of *Fortune*, to boast of its ability to build a seawater-treatment plant in the Arctic, mobile cranes in Europe, and a tire factory in Sudan. On the last page, three Daewoo executives were shown wearing sweat-shirts from the places where they obtained their know-how—the University of Wisconsin, Columbia University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

An American visitor to the Hyundai shipyard is readily told of the efficient, inexpensive work done there to repair ships from the U.S. Seventh Fleet, but he comes away wondering how the displaced workers from the shut-down U.S. Navy yards in Boston and San Francisco, not to mention their congressional repre-

sentatives, would feel if they knew. It is hard to be sure whether the Koreans have gained any technological advantage from repairing American ships, but it is an open secret that they have reaped military and economic benefits from their familiarity with other American matériel. With the permission of the U.S. government, the South Korean military has copied the American M-16 rifle and done a substantial business selling the copies to the governments of the Philippines and Thailand. Some American officials believe that the Koreans have gone beyond the authorized sales to those countries and, to keep their assembly lines going, are now selling American-designed weapons elsewhere. Since there is nothing to be done about it anyway, the Americans who suspect the violations just ignore them.

American industries are unhappy over the benefits South Korea has reaped from its participation in the U.S. "generalized system of preferences" (GSP) program, aid through trade that provides tariff relief to help developing countries expand their industrial bases, diversify their exports, and earn more foreign exchange. A total of 140 countries get help from the GSP program for some 3,000 categories of imports, but South Korea has been near the top of the list of beneficiaries since the GSP's inception, in the mid-1970s. In 1982, it was second only to Taiwan; more than a billion dollars' worth of otherwise dutiable South Korean products were admitted duty-free, costing the U.S. Treasury at least \$55 million.

But potentially the most dramatic evidence of South Korean competitiveness with American industry is coming soon, when the Hyundai Motor Company begins to export its high-performance, low-cost cars to the United States. Its subcompact Pony, a comfortable, practical, and inexpensive car, already accounts for 70 percent of South Korea's domestic automobile market. When the slightly larger Stellar has been modified to meet U.S. emission-control standards, it will be a formidable rival not only to American cars but also to the Japanese imports that are so controversial.

DISSATISFACTION OF A different sort is growing on the Korean side of the relationship. One reason that South Korean products compete so effectively on the world market is that wages in South Korea are generally low and working

Merit Pay for Teachers

Amid the chorus of concern about the troubles afflicting education in America, the idea of merit pay for teachers is gaining favor.

Fully 80% of the people polled in a recent national survey expressed their approval of basing salaries on merit to attract and retain better public school teachers.

In most fields, including business, the best pay generally goes to the best professional performers. Not so in teaching.

Traditionally, pedagogic salaries are scaled to length of service up to a ceiling. Teachers of equal experience and educational attainments, working in the same school system, get the same pay. Meritorious performance goes unrecognized in the paycheck.

Lack of financial incentive is one of the reasons why the brightest prospects among college students are discouraged from taking up teaching. Too many job openings in the schools go to second-raters. As a result, students in alarming numbers are coming out of the public schools, diplomas in hand, ill prepared for college or the workplace.

A pivotal solution to the nation's educational shortcomings lies in upgrading the teaching ranks. Any such effort must be directed at keeping top teachers in the classrooms, instead of disheartening them so they leave for jobs elsewhere, and also at attracting

newcomers who are smart, talented, and motivated.

There's merit to merit pay. In the words of President Reagan, "How else do you provide an incentive for attracting the best and the brightest into education?"

If we want better education, we need better teachers. One way to draw them is to pay them better. Basic pay scales should be improved. This should be coupled with accountability for performance and special recompense for special creativity, dedication, and achievement in stretching young minds.

Teacher's organizations have long opposed merit pay, although their opposition shows signs of changing in the face of mounting public disaffection with the educational system. Among their concerns is that supervisors and administrators would be swayed by personal favoritism and would apply unfair standards in judging teachers' work. To us in business and industry, where performance appraisals and pay pegged to merit are accepted practices, that scarcely seems to be an insoluble drawback.

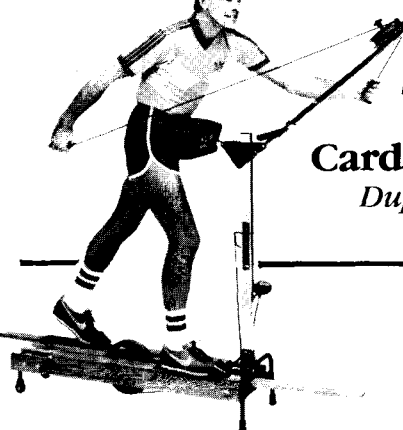
Teaching used to be one of the most honored of professions. Public education in America used to be unrivaled in quality. Recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching, through merit pay, could help restore the profession and the institution to the stature they once held.





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conditions often bad. The impressive per capita income figures conceal a grossly uneven distribution of wealth. Social-welfare programs are not very advanced. Not surprisingly for the ultimate free-enterprise society, South Korea is the home of a few hundred multimillionaires and millions of extremely poor people—not poor by comparison with the populations of the least-developed nations, but abject by comparison with the new elite in their own society. The sweatshops that turn out cheap Korean textiles are written off as part of the price of national development. Their American investors look the other way and pocket substantial profits.

Labor unions that have protested these conditions are accused of stirring up social unrest; as a rule, the government charges them with subversion and brutally represses them. Most unions have now been disbanded. Some companies, like the Hyundai conglomerate, have sought to deal with grievances through worker-management councils, but others, including the Korean subsidiaries of American corporations (Control Data, for example), have resorted to physical intimidation. In one notorious instance, women employees of an electronics firm who participated in a sit-down strike were attacked by thugs brought in by the employer; later, the workers, rather than their attackers, were charged with crimes.

In conversation, union activists, university faculty members and students, and Christian militants often blame the United States for these appalling circumstances. They contend that despite occasional American pressure in high-profile cases—such as that of opposition leader Kim Dae Jung, who was finally released from prison in December of 1982 to obtain medical treatment in the United States—Washington has usually reacted with indifference while one South Korean military regime after another has engaged in serious human-rights abuses. As one elderly clergyman told me, "We've become convinced that the United States doesn't care about us as a people but only as a military base."

There are many U.S. bases in Korea. American troops are stationed in the heart of Seoul and along the DMZ and are scattered elsewhere around the country. The South Koreans give them complete latitude, and, under arrangements that date back to the Korean War,

many of the local forces still report to American commanders. Perhaps the consideration most significant to the Pentagon is that unlike the Japanese, who are understandably skittish about the presence of nuclear weapons on their soil or in their waters, the South Korean government welcomes the weapons as part of its security guarantee.

The role of the American forces has occasionally been inflammatory. For example, they are widely believed by dissidents to have provided moral, if not physical, support to the South Korean troops that ruthlessly put down a ten-day civil uprising in Kwangju in May of 1980. Kwangju is at the heart of the Cholla district, an area that has been at odds with Korean central governments for centuries. (Kim Dae Jung is only the latest of many dissidents to emerge from Cholla.) The government claims that fewer than 200 people died during the Kwangju insurrection, but unofficial sources say the toll may have been four or five times higher, and they insist that the United States is partly responsible. There is still dispute over whether the American commander in Korea at the time, General John A. Wickham, Jr. (now the U.S. Army Chief of Staff), actually released Korean regiments under his command for "security work" in Kwangju. What is clear is that Wickham raised no known objection to the way the South Koreans handled the uprising, and that a few months later he suggested publicly that the Koreans were not ready for democracy.

The Kwangju incident—so controversial that more than three years later South Korean government officials still try to dissuade visitors from traveling to Cholla—played a key role in the consolidation of power by South Korea's latest military strong man, Chun Doo Hwan. There is an aura of mystery about Chun, a political general who emerged on top during the jockeying for power following the assassination of President Park Chung Hee, by the chief of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, in 1979. He is regarded less as a ruler with his own clear vision of South Korea's future than as the front man for a particular military clique, all of whose members were in the eleventh class of the Korean Military Academy (which is styled after West Point). One of the most controversial aspects of Chun's regime is the role in national affairs played by his wife, a socially prominent woman with excellent

business connections. Several of her relatives have been implicated in financial scandals.

Chun says he would like to be the first postwar leader of Korea to leave office peacefully, and he has promised to step down in 1988 after arranging elections to choose his successor. But in the meantime he has, if anything, tightened up the political system, which had begun to loosen a bit during the last years of the Park regime. Political forces aspiring to genuine democracy are banned from the National Assembly, where the officially tolerated "opposition" now consists of small parties that quarrel over details but go along with most of what Chun wants.

The press, once the last redoubt of democratic opposition in South Korea, has virtually given up under government pressure. Earlier this year, during the long hunger strike of dissident leader Kim Young Sam, which was widely reported overseas, not a word about his actions appeared in Seoul's mass-circulation daily newspapers. When Kim gave up his protest and held a news conference, even that went largely unreported.

In another echo of America, journalism has become a popular field of study among young Koreans. Most of their professors teach a theory of pluralism that they learned in the United States but that few of the students will ever have an opportunity to practice at home. Those who try, whether working for newspapers, magazines, or state-supported or commercial broadcasting, are invariably fired on government orders. Editors who resist such orders find their own careers endangered.

Many young Koreans resent the Americanization of their society. Seoul, after all, was established as a center of culture and government in 1392, a hundred years before Christopher Columbus discovered North America, and it is humiliating to see so much of the old and the traditional replaced by the new and the cost-efficient from across the Pacific. Some Korean intellectuals espouse "dependency theory," a neo-Marxist strain in political science that holds that the noncommunist nations of the developing world, for all their pretenses of independence, are dependent on an international economic system dominated by the powerful capitalist nations. The theory also argues that the new elites in nations like South Korea, in league with that sys-

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tem, suppress the majority of their own people.

Perhaps the greatest blasphemy, in South Korean terms, is the growing, if surreptitious, popularity of a revisionist explanation for the origins of the Korean War. Outlined long ago by the maverick American journalist I. F. Stone, it holds that the southern regime of Syngman Rhee, with the connivance of U.S. officials, may have provoked the North Korean attack of 1950, and that the Americans, in any event, welcomed the attack as an opportunity to take an anticommunist stand at the start of the Cold War, whatever the cost in Korean lives. Needless to say, South Koreans who take that view have long since given up feeling grateful to the United States. The arson attack on the American cultural center in the port city of Pusan in March, 1982, was a demonstration of their attitude—and an especially symbolic one at that, since Pusan was the headquarters of the American-supported wartime regime after it was driven out of Seoul.

DEFENDERS OF THE Chun government invariably justify its excesses by pointing to the continuing threat from north of the DMZ. It is not difficult to be convinced that such a threat exists.

Hardly a month passes that the South Koreans do not announce the killing or capture of North Korean infiltrators. They have been discovered floating in boats on the Imjin River in the DMZ, swimming in frogman suits off the Japan Sea coast, and, in one notorious case, hiding in the hills outside Seoul, just a few miles from the Blue House, where the president lives. South Korean paranoia focuses on the possibility that some raiders have slipped through the net and are posing as law-abiding South Koreans, until the hour comes round to strike.

That fear guarantees a continual state of alert in the South. Air-raid drills remain a routine feature of life in Seoul, and on several recent occasions, when Chinese and North Korean military planes penetrated South Korean airspace, the capital was thrown into panic—until it became clear that the planes were being flown by pilots who wanted to defect.

Still in power in North Korea after more than thirty-five years, Kim Il Sung is one of the world's most unpredictable despots, and his unsavory regime has

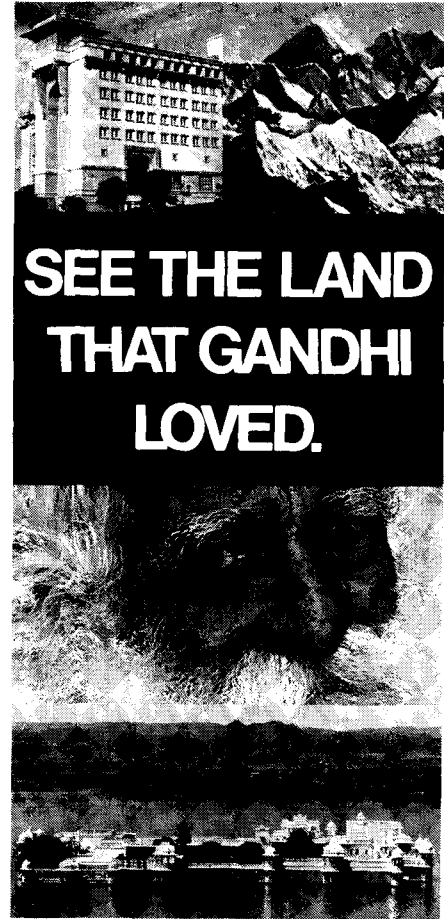
few defenders anywhere. It, too, has managed a certain amount of reconstruction since the Korean War, but, according to Western estimates, North Koreans today have an annual per capita income of less than \$800. The disparity is probably one reason Kim has refused to participate in any program for the reunification of families divided by the armistice line, or for the re-establishment of any sort of communication across that line. Indeed, North Korean radios and television sets are said to be manufactured in such a way that they will not receive broadcasts from South Korea and the outside world.

By all accounts, both the Soviets and the Chinese have long since given up any pretense of influence over Kim, and they are supposedly now concentrating on trying to exert some control over the selection of his successor. Kim's official choice for that spot is said to be his son, Kim Jong Il, but Kim Jr.'s dominance over several rival stepbrothers is apparently far from assured.

The widespread perception of aggressive irrationality in the North serves the short-term purposes of the South Korean government. It informs the national spirit, and it helps explain why South Korea spends nearly \$4 billion a year on defense to keep up with the North Koreans, who are generally believed to have the largest standing army, relative to total population, in the world.

The political orthodoxy in South Korea is that the nation must work toward peaceful reunification. There is even a ministry in the Seoul government whose formal mission is to achieve that elusive goal. But each time North-South negotiations have gotten under way, sponsored by the Red Cross, they have broken up almost immediately, and Kim's intransigence seems to be to blame. His most recent gambit, several years ago, was to say that he would resume discussions with the South only on condition that he be allowed to select all the members of the southern negotiating team.

South Korea has persistently sought to make mischief for North Korea by trying to persuade its two staunchest supporters, the Soviet Union and China, to expand their links with the South. The Seoul government has sent people to various international meetings in the Soviet Union in recent years, and now the Soviets have begun to respond: last year representatives of Tass attended a convention of Asian journalists in South Ko-



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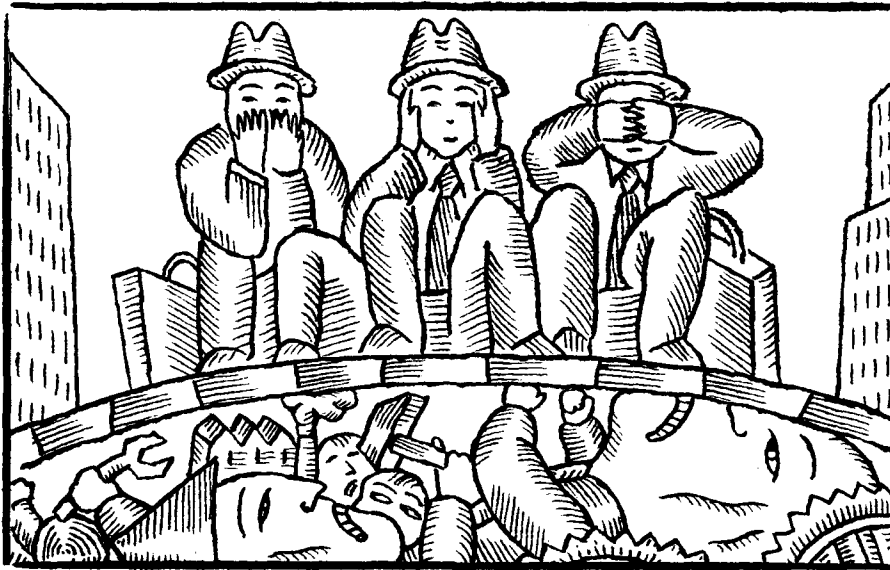
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rea, and a Soviet museum director went there for an archaeological conference. There has been similar progress with China: a South Korean agricultural official was admitted to China this year, the first such visit since 1949. Even after the Soviet attack on the Korean jetliner, and even as the Seoul government was orchestrating large-scale anti-Russian demonstrations in response, officials said they had decided not to abandon their "nordpolitik" of working for better relations with the Chinese and the Soviets.

AS LONG AS there are two Koreas, in different international camps and hostile to each other, South Korea will face a constant need to establish and prove its legitimacy as a country. A number of symbolic tests loom during the next few years. The North Koreans did their best to hold down attendance at an Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Seoul in October of this year. (Indeed, a diplomat from Pyongyang was caught trying to bribe a Finnish parliamentary leader to abstain from voting to hold the meeting in Seoul.) More important are the Asian Games scheduled for Seoul in 1986 and the Olympics in 1988, prospects that have added to the South Korean construction boom. South Korea also looks forward to a visit from Pope John Paul II, set for next spring; in exchange for the prestige, the government is prepared to run the risk that the pontiff will side with the outspoken political dissidents within the large South Korean Catholic Church.

South Korean officials realize that to achieve greater legitimacy the country must improve its image overseas, espe-

cially in the United States. They are distressed that so much of the American press coverage of their country focuses on human-rights violations. Yet the South Korean government seems to be unaware that it invites more such coverage by restricting the foreign press—expelling reporters whose work it does not like and barring the entry of others, often on specious grounds. This in turn comes to be portrayed as a violation of freedom of the press.

The South Korean image in the United States seems to be getting steadily worse. The efforts in the mid-1970s by Korean businessman and socialite Tong-sun Park to buy influence with Congress on behalf of the Seoul government made an ugly scandal. Today many Americans associate Korea with the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, whose Unification Church is widely regarded as a scam and who has himself been convicted of tax evasion and sentenced to prison. Moon's church and other, more obscure Korean religious groups have provided many South Koreans with a route around American immigration laws, permitting them to seek admission to the United States as ministers, a category on which there is no quota.

The number of Koreans and Korean-Americans living in the United States is now estimated at 700,000; about a third of them are in the Los Angeles area. Some of the Korean immigrants to this country came originally from North Korea, and so it is not surprising that in recent years the Pyongyang government has sought to make contact with them, dangling the prospect of information about family members who have not

been permitted to leave the North. The South Korean government is deeply suspicious of such contact. Apparently with U.S. government permission, it has put police officers and intelligence officials into its consulates in Los Angeles and New York to monitor what it considers to be the subversion of the Korean-American community. According to some Korean-Americans, the actions of these Seoul government agents on American soil, if widely known, would be fuel for another scandal.

WHATEVER THE CAUSE, the American sense of loyalty toward South Korea has slipped sharply over the years. William Watts, of Potomac Associates, in Washington, who studies the attitudes of Americans and Asians toward each other, has estimated that only a third of the U.S. public would be willing to defend South Korea today if that country were attacked. A recent study by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations showed that on a "thermometer" measuring American warmth toward other countries, South Korea scored well below the middle, just behind South Africa and barely ahead of Syria. (Still, most Americans seem to oppose the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, and congressional discontent forced Jimmy Carter to cancel his plan to bring many of them home.)

In an effort to shore up American support, the South Korean government is increasingly turning to the right, which will not credit complaints about South Korea's human-rights record. That puts the political defense of the Seoul regime in the hands of people like Republican Senator Jesse Helms, of North Carolina, and the late Democratic Congressman Larry McDonald, of Georgia, who had just been elected president of the John Birch Society when he died in the Korean jetliner shot down by the Soviet Union. Indeed, Helms was an organizer of a conference (to which McDonald was en route) marking the thirtieth anniversary of the U.S.-South Korean Mutual Defense Treaty—a circumstance that caused moderate American politicians with a genuine interest in Korean security to stay away. In other words, the South Koreans have narrowed their political base in the United States, and they seem unaware of the potential consequences.

Yet South Korea and the United States are locked in an embrace that nei-

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ther side can break. As a Korean Christian activist put it recently, "This is the one country in the world that cannot possibly say, 'Yankee, Go Home.'" Without the United States, South Korea cannot survive as an independent nation; indeed, some strategists maintain, it is only the presence of American forces on the peninsula that deters the North Koreans from attacking again. But as long as the United States is in South Korea, a dissident argued, it should befriend other elements besides Pentagon-trained generals and the business elite; and it should promote democracy.

American diplomats in South Korea say they do just that, up to the point where their suggestions might be regarded as meddling rather than as friendly advice. But when they sit in meetings trying to figure out how to persuade the South Koreans to liberalize their system, they complain about the myth of American influence over decisions in Seoul. Their impression is that the people who rule South Korea know how to get just what they want from the United States without having to sacrifice much in return. And the United States—afraid that it will appear to be abandoning or weakening a loyal friend—is trapped into giving it.

Certainly much of the rest of the world operates on the assumption that South Korea is an American satellite. The Soviet Union, in explaining its destruction of the Korean Airlines plane, insisted that the aircraft was on an espionage mission not for its own country but for the United States. To many in the Third World, it was a plausible allegation. And the Reagan Administration, while denying that it would ever use an unarmed civilian airliner for intelligence purposes, did react as if the plane had been an American one, not a Korean plane carrying sixty-two Americans among its 269 passengers. The United States seemed to feel obligated to speak on behalf of South Korea.

The Korean-American alliance is facing new tests all the time. One of the most profound has to do with the growing role of Japan in Pacific defense arrangements. Koreans bitterly remember the Japanese occupation of their country; many of them were prevented from using their own language and their own names in the Japanese effort to eradicate Korean culture. Even today, Koreans living in Japan are the object of discrimination and harassment; some families

who have been there for three generations (having originally been brought over as forced laborers) are still unable to obtain Japanese citizenship. The Japanese still admit to very negative feelings about Koreans. In the public-opinion "thermometer" readings in Japan, South Korea ranks just below the Soviet Union and just above North Korea, which is at the bottom. By pressing Japan to spend more on defense and trying to bring Japan and South Korea closer together under an American security umbrella, the United States may inadvertently inflame an old animosity.

As a new generation enters Congress, the institutional American memory of the Korean War will fade. As Korean products make inroads on the U.S. marketplace, American workers will become angrier. And as the South Korean government continues to insist that political repression and economic exploitation are somehow prerequisites of domestic stability, a growing number of Americans may grow uneasy with supporting a regime that is precariously unpopular with its own citizens.

The central question is whether the current rulers of South Korea can be persuaded to reform the country's political system in order to attract wider domestic and international support. Virtually all the genuine opposition leaders—whether in exile, in prison, or under surveillance—are anticommunist advocates of democracy and a free-market economy, albeit one with a more human face.

For the Korean leadership, the challenge is to learn to work with its current critics before they are pushed aside by an angrier, more militant generation. If South Korea can move gradually toward a more open society, as Spain and Greece and other authoritarian states have done in recent years, it may be able to avoid the kind of crisis that has engulfed other American dependents. For the United States government and the American people, the challenge is how to encourage a democratic evolution in Korea and display friendship toward the South Korean people, as well as due concern over their legitimate security needs, without becoming irrevocably identified with the regime in power.

—Sanford J. Ungar

Sanford J. Ungar is a resident associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, in Washington, D.C.

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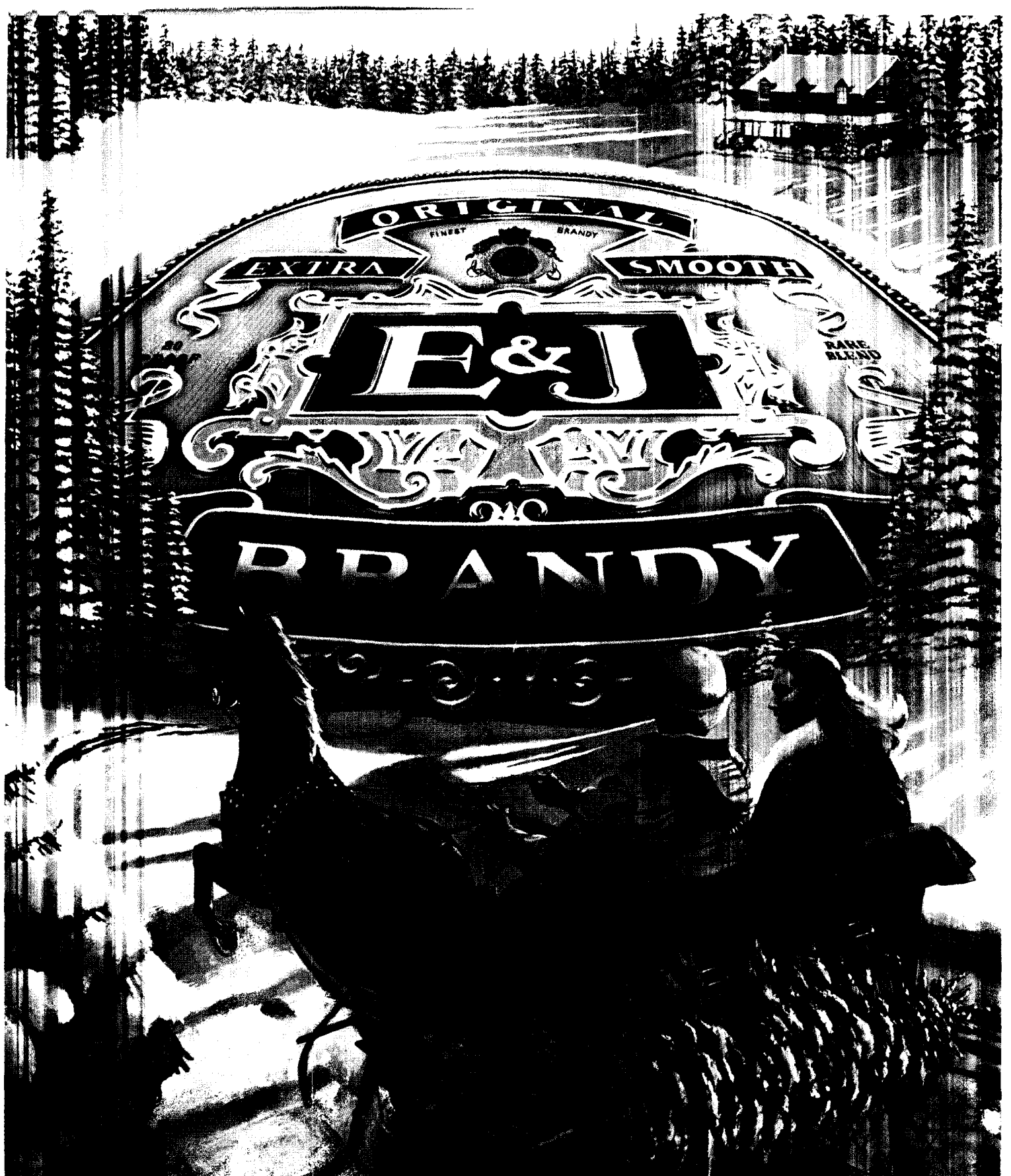
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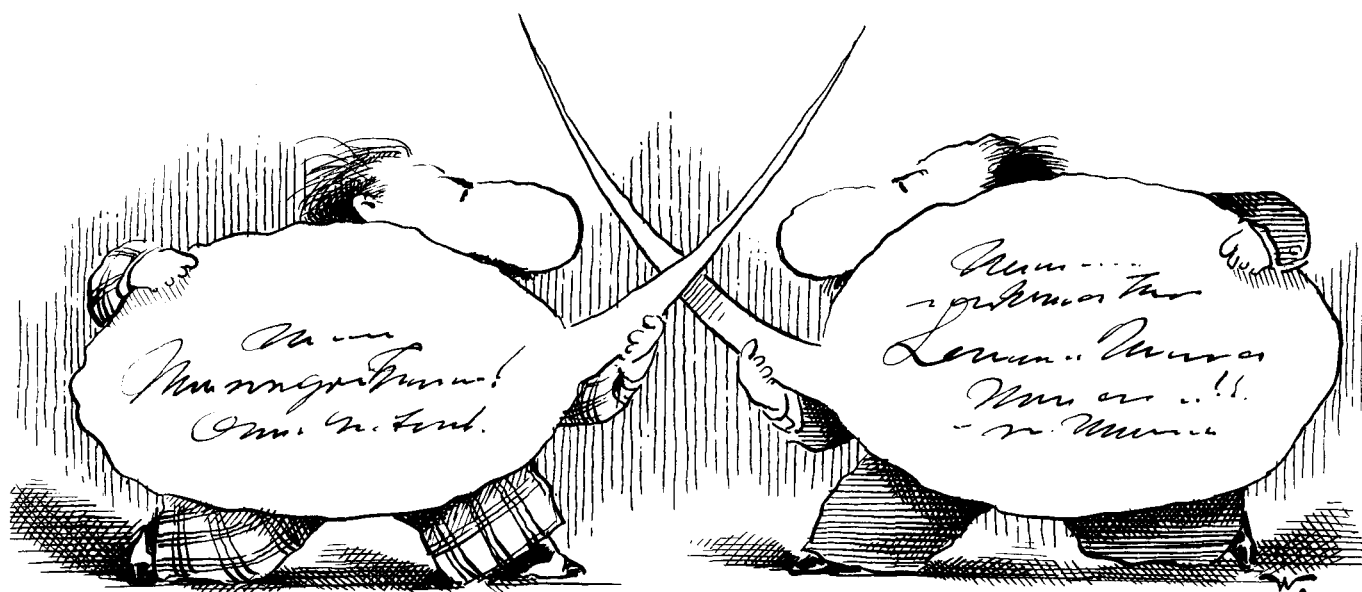
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*An argument for a middle way
between permissiveness and traditionalism*

THE DECLINE OF GRAMMAR

BY GEOFFREY NUNBERG



Every one has noticed the way in which the Times chooses to spell the word "diocese;" it always spells it diocess, deriving it, I suppose, from Zeus and census. The Journal des Débats might just as well write "diocess" instead of "diocèse," but imagine the Journal des Débats doing so! Imagine an educated Frenchman indulging himself in an orthographical antic of this sort, in face of the grave respect with which the Academy and its dictionary invest the French language! Some people will say these are little things; they are not; they are of bad example. They tend to spread the baneful notion that there is no such thing as a high, correct standard in intellectual matters; that every one may as well take his own way; they are at variance with the severe discipline necessary for all real culture; they confirm us in habits of wilfulness and eccentricity, which hurt our minds, and damage our credit with serious people.—Matthew Arnold in "The Literary Influence of Academies," 1865

IS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE—OR, TO PUT IT LESS apocalyptically, English prose writing—really in a bad way? How would one tell? The standard jeremiads of the Sunday supplements give only anecdotal evidence, and that of a curious sort; the examples of degradation that they present are drawn not from current plays or novels, which are grammatically and syntactically *extra judicium*, but from advertisements, scholarly papers, and—most popular of all—memos from college deans. It is hard to believe that any of these texts will survive even until the next century, much less that late-twentieth-century English will be judged by their example. Our picture of the English of previous centuries, after all, has been formed on the basis of a careful selection of the best that was said and thought back then; *their* hacks and bureaucrats are mercifully silent now. But while it is understandable that

speakers of a language with a literary tradition would tend to be pessimistic about its course, there is no more hard evidence for a general linguistic degeneration than there is reason to believe that Aaron and Rose are inferior to Ruth and Gehrig.

Most of my fellow linguists, in fact, would say that it is absurd even to talk about a language changing for the better or the worse. When you have the historical picture before you, and can see how Indo-European gradually slipped into Germanic, Germanic into Anglo-Saxon, and Anglo-Saxon into the English of Chaucer, then Shakespeare, and then Henry James, the process of linguistic change seems as ineluctable and impersonal as continental drift. From this Olympian point of view, not even the Norman invasion had much of an effect on the structure of the language, and all the tirades of all the grammarians since

the Renaissance sound like the prattlings of landscape gardeners who hope by frantic efforts to keep Alaska from bumping into Asia.

The long run will surely prove the linguists right: English will survive whatever "abuses" its current critics complain of. And by that I mean not just that people will go on using English and its descendants in their daily commerce but that they will continue to make art with it as well. Yet it is hard to take comfort in the scholars' sanguine detachment. We all know what Keynes said about the long run, and in the meantime does it really matter not at all how we choose to speak and write? It may be that my children will use *gift* and *impact* as verbs without the slightest compunction (just as I use *contact*, wondering that anyone ever bothered to object to it). But I can't overcome the feeling that it is wrong for me to use them in that way and that people of my generation who say "We decided to gift them with a desk set" are in some sense guilty of a moral lapse, whether because they are ignorant or because they are weak. In the face of that conviction, it really doesn't matter to me whether *to gift* will eventually prevail, carried on the historical tide. Our glory, Silone said, lies in not having to submit to history.

Linguistic manners are like any others. People have always found it worthwhile to reflect on how best to behave, for the sake of at least individual enlightenment and improvement. Since the eighteenth century, most of our great moralists have at one time or another turned their attention to the language, from Addison, Swift, and Johnson to Arnold, James, Shaw, Mencken, and Orwell. In their essays and in the great grammars and dictionaries, we find the most direct secular continuation of the homiletic tradition, reflecting the conviction that the mastery of polite prose is a moral accomplishment, to which we will be moved by appeals to our highest instincts.

Take *Modern English Usage*, by that good man H. W. Fowler, "a Christian in all but actual faith," as the *Dictionary of National Biography* called him. Despite a revision in 1965, it is out-of-date, yet it still has a coterie as devoted as the fans of Jane Austen or Max Beerbohm, who prize its diffident irony, its prose cadences, and, above all, the respect it shows for its readers' intelligence and principles. Here, for example, is Fowler on the insertion of quotation marks or an expression like "to use an expressive colloquialism" to mark off a slang word from which the writer wants to dissociate himself:

Surprise a person of the class that is supposed to keep servants cleaning his own boots, & either he will go on with the job while he talks to you, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, or else he will explain that the bootboy or scullery-maid is ill & give you to understand that he is, despite appearances, superior to boot-clean-

ing. If he takes the second course, you conclude that he is not superior to it; if the first, that perhaps he is. So it is with the various apologies to which recourse is had by writers who wish to safeguard their dignity & yet be vivacious, to combine comfort with elegance, to touch pitch & not be defiled. . . . Some writers use a slang phrase because it suits them, & box the ears of people in general because it is slang; a refinement on the institution of whipping-boys, by which they not only have the boy, but do the whipping.

This passage would not be out of place in the company of Addison and Steele. It is apt, amusing, and above all instructive. It obviously has done little to stem the mania for quotation marks (WE ARE "CLOSED," I saw in the window of a shoe-repair shop the other day), but it did at least persuade me to remove the quotes from around the word *life-style* in a review I was writing, and I am a better person for it.

IF WE ARE BENT ON FINDING A DECLINE IN STANDARDS, the place to look is not in the language itself but in the way it is talked about. In the profusion of new books and articles on the state of the language, and in most new usage books, the moral note, if it is sounded at all, is either wavering or shrill. What is largely missing is the idea that there is any pleasure or instruction to be derived from considering what makes good usage good. Rather, grammar comes increasingly to be regarded as a mandarin code that requires only ritual justification. And, for all the heated polemics over the importance of grammar, it appears that each party at least implicitly accepts this view.

Linguists, of course, have been arguing for a long time that the rules of traditional grammar have no scientific or logical justification, and that the only reason grammarians consider certain usages "correct" is that they happen to have been adopted by the privileged classes in the past. As the linguists Anthony Kroch and Cathy Small put it in a recent article, "prescriptivism [that is, traditional grammar] is simply the ideology by which the guardians of the standard language impose their linguistic norms on people who have perfectly serviceable norms of their own." We will see that this view is not entirely justified. Nonetheless, the linguists have won over a large part of the educational establishment, so that "correct English" has come to mean no more than "standard English," the English spoken by the educated middle class. A few radicals have gone on to argue that traditional grammar, as an instrument of racism and class oppression, has no place in the school curriculum. But more often educators counsel an enlightened hypocrisy: standard English should be taught because there are still benighted employers who take stock in such things. This position is put concisely by Jim Quinn, whose *American Tongue and Cheek* is a lively and informative popularization of the linguists' views.

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The fact remains that there is a way of writing that is necessary to success, just as there are rules about which fork to use at an expensive restaurant. And preparing children for success means preparing them to manipulate those rules, just as they have to be taught to manipulate the salad fork and demitasse spoon.

But if the rules of grammar are given no more justification than are the niceties of table manners, perhaps we should leave the teaching of them to finishing schools, especially since students know very well that imperfect grammar is *not* much of a stumbling block, even on the road to high office. Certainly instruction in grammar by modern methods does not lead to any deeper understanding of how to resolve the problems that arise incessantly when we struggle to put thoughts into words.

To see the state to which things have fallen, one need only compare Fowler with a modern composition text and a modern prescriptive grammarian on a vexed point of grammar—the problem of which pronoun to use with an antecedent like *each* or *anyone*. Here is Fowler:

Each & the rest are all singular; that is undisputed; in a perfect language there would exist pronouns & possessives that were of as doubtful gender as they & yet were, like them, singular; i.e., it would have words meaning him-or-her, himself-or-herself, his-or-her. But just as French lacks our power of distinguishing (without additional words) between his, her, and its, so we lack the French power of saying in one word his-or-her. There are three makeshifts:—A, *as anybody can see for himself or herself*; B, *as anybody can see for themselves*; & C, *as anybody can see for himself*. No-one who can help it chooses A; it is correct, & is sometimes necessary, but it is so clumsy as to be ridiculous except when explicitness is urgent. . . . B is the popular solution; it sets the literary man's teeth on edge & he exerts himself to give the

same meaning in some entirely different way if he is not prepared, as he usually is, to risk C; but it should be recorded that the OED . . . refrains from any word of condemnation. C is here recommended. It involves the convention that where the matter of sex is not conspicuous or important *he* and *his* shall be allowed to represent a person instead of a man, or say a man (*homo*) instead of a man (*vir*). Whether that . . . is an arrogant demand on the part of male England, everyone must decide for himself (or for himself or herself, or for themselves).

Fowler's article is a model of the traditional grammatical method. He begins by acknowledging the problem, and then addresses it with arguments from precedent and analogy, being careful to distinguish between the grammatical questions that lie within his brief and the political questions that lie outside it. As in all good homilies, it is the method, not the text, that matters; read Fowler on this and you will have an idea of how he might come at a wholly different problem.

Now contrast the approach to the problem taken by the *Harbrace College Handbook*, a standard text in college composition classes since its publication, in 1941. Its great virtue is that it is ideally organized to meet the needs of a teacher who may have to correct two or three hundred pages of student writing every week. Inside the back cover of the book is a table in which grammatical errors are classified into family, genus, and species, and are assigned code numbers. The point at issue is listed as: "6b(1) Agreement: Pronoun and Antecedent: *Man, each, etc.* as antecedent." Whenever a student makes an *anyone . . . they* sort of error, the instructor need only write "6b(1)" in the margin, and the student is referred to the corresponding section of the text, in which this point of usage is explained. There he can read (I quote from the seventh edition and omit some example sentences):



In formal English, use a singular pronoun to refer to such antecedents as *man*, *woman*, *kind* . . . *anyone*, *someone*, and *nobody*. In informal English, plural pronouns are occasionally used to refer to such words.

Caution: Avoid illogical sentences that may result from strict adherence to this rule.

ILLOGICAL Since every one of the patients seemed discouraged, I told a joke to cheer him up.

BETTER Since *all* the patients seemed discouraged, I told a joke to cheer *them* up.

These bare instructions give no reason at all for choosing the singular pronoun. In fact, there is no mention of an error in the use of the plural, which is labeled not "incorrect" or "illogical" but merely "formal," as if the difference between plural and singular were on a level with the difference between *cop* and *policeman*, or *horse* and *steed*. The entry does touch on a point that is quite interesting to theoretical linguists, to the effect that English grammar does not generally allow the singular pronoun with an antecedent like *everyone* when that antecedent is not in the same clause. But the *Handbook* says only that the sentence is "illogical," giving no indication of what point of logic is violated. What is the student to make of that, especially since the *Handbook* has not explained the use of the singular as being "logical" in the first place? The student who finds "6b(1)" cropping up on his compositions may learn to rectify the error, but only in the way he learns to rectify his misspellings: by rote, learning nothing else in the process.

The linguists are at least forthright in their rejection of linguistic morality. Their opponents, the defenders of traditional values, are more deceptive. They talk a great deal about morality, but in millenarian tones, as if the rules of grammar were matters of revealed truth rather than the tentative conclusions of thoughtful argument. Here is John Simon on the same point of grammar:

The fact that some people are too thickheaded to grasp, for example, that "anyone" is singular, as the "one" in it plainly denotes, does not oblige those who know better to tolerate "anyone can do as they please." The correct form is, of course, "anyone may do as he pleases," but in America, in informal usage, "can" has pretty much replaced "may" in this sense, and there is nothing more to be done about it; but we cannot and must not let "one" become plural. That way madness lies.

And don't let fanatical feminists convince you that it must be "as he or she pleases," which is clumsy and usually serves no other purpose than that of placating the kind of extremist who does not deserve to be placated. The impersonal "he" covers both sexes; . . .

For Simon, the whole matter is cut and dried, exactly as it is for the *Harbrace College Handbook*, except that his world is divided into the "thickheaded" and "those who know better." That last phrase is particularly telling, not just in its appeal to a reader's smug self-satisfaction but

also because it shows that for Simon grammar really is a matter of knowing the rules, not of working them out. Indeed, he has written elsewhere: "There is, I believe, a morality of language: an obligation to preserve and nurture the niceties, the fine distinctions, that have been handed down to us." That is the credo of a czarist émigré, not an English grammarian. Johnson and Fowler did not regard themselves as mere keepers of the sacred flame.

Simon's shots at feminists are also instructive. For him, a commitment to correct grammar is naturally associated with a conservative ideology. Like William Safire and William Buckley, he seems to see good grammar as bathed in the same rosy glow that surrounds the other traditional institutions that liberal America has forsaken. This indicates a shift of some importance. For most of its history the English grammatical tradition has been associated with classical liberalism. Its earlier defenders, from Johnson to Auden and Orwell, would probably be distressed to learn that their standard had been taken up by the right. But, then, the ideal of grammar that the conservatives champion is much changed from what the earlier grammarians had in mind.

Simon is particularly shrill, but other writers on the state of the language are equally dogmatic. Edwin Newman and Richard Mitchell (the "Underground Grammarian") write books about the language that rarely, if ever, cite a dictionary or a standard grammar; evidently one just knows these things. William Safire is a different story. Affable and self-effacing ("I may not know much about grammar, but . . ."), he brings out of the woodwork readers who are less frequently snobs than enthusiasts, who exchange with him schoolmarm maxims and scraps of linguistic folklore. These are word-lovers who live to catch out the mighty in a misused *whom*; though their zeal is commendable, their authority is suspect.

The point of traditional grammar was to demonstrate a way of thinking about grammatical problems that encouraged thoughtful attention to language, not to canonize a set of arbitrary rules and strictures. And in the absence of an academy, our authorities traditionally were chosen by the consensus of a public that recognized questions of grammar as worthy of constant consideration and revision. But the new attitudes toward grammar—as evidenced by the ossification of the rules and the partisan tone of the discussion—have put the whole matter on a different footing. Prescriptive grammar has passed out of the realm of criticism, where it sat for two hundred years, to become instead a branch of cultural heraldry. Here and there, people do write about the problems with wit and learning. I think of the linguists Dwight Bolinger and Edward Finegan. (Finegan's *Attitudes Toward English Usage* is a wonderfully fair-minded history of the English grammatical tradition.) And critics like Joseph Epstein, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and the late Dwight Macdonald have leavened their heat with a good deal of light. But these peo-



ple have tiny constituencies compared with the educational apparatchiks who write the handbooks, or the pop grammarians, like Simon and Newman, who play to the galleries.

There is nothing in modern writing about the language that is more pathetic than attempts to fix the blame for the "problem" (whatever the problem is understood to be) on this or that small group. If the English grammatical tradition has declined, this is the result of basic changes in our attitude toward the language, themselves the consequences of far-reaching social changes. It is not a case of the schools having "failed in their duty." As Richard Lanham argues in his provocative book *Style: An Anti-Textbook*, "You cannot teach as duty what society does not feel a duty." Neither are the linguists responsible. Their criticisms of the grammatical tradition are overstated, we will see, but they are much closer to the mark when they describe the contemporary scene, for the mastery of grammar has come to be considered largely a social accomplishment. And the traditionalists like Simon and Newman are even less to blame; they are simply moving into the cultural vacuum.

BEFORE WE CAN TALK ABOUT HOW TO PUT GRAMMAR back on its moral and intellectual feet, we must consider what grammatical criticism has been all about in the English-speaking world, and how we have come to the present sad state of affairs.

We usually assume that good English is straightforwardly based on a few simple and unexceptionable maxims: keep it clear, direct, and logical, the handbooks say, and the rest is commentary. Yet our ideas about good grammar are in fact quite idiosyncratic, even as measured against those of our linguistic next-door neighbors; many would

seem as odd to a Frenchman or an Italian (not to mention an Elizabethan) as our ideas about good manners. For one thing, why do we harp on just these virtues—why don't we insist that language be colorful and euphonious as well? We value these latter attributes, to be sure, but we don't consider their mastery a matter of civic responsibility, and a composition teacher would not dare to reduce a student's grade on the grounds that his metaphors were flat, or that his sentences were choppy, though correct. We hold that elegance of expression is like musicality, and cannot really be taught at all, a claim that Racine or Milton would have found incomprehensible.

One reason for the canonization of clarity and logicity is that for us the notion of good usage is applicable only to the narrow class of writing that we call expository prose. Novelists and poets simply aren't held to the rules of grammar; what they do is "creative writing," a thing apart. But, again, such a sharp distinction is peculiar to modern English; in Italian and French—as well as in the English written before the nineteenth century—the language of poetry is not exempt from the requirements of correctness, unless the poem has been expressly written in dialect.

This disregard for the grammar of poetry and fiction is connected with another curious feature of English-language values: unlike speakers of most Continental languages, we do not hold that there is a single "correct" accent, and we permit each area to set its own pronunciation standards. The New Yorker who drops his "r"s (or the Englishman who pronounces his) may be looked down on, but he is guilty only of a social gaffe, like the man who wears a polyester leisure suit. It is inconceivable that a New York City teacher would tell his pupils that pronouncing "horse" to rhyme with "sauce" is "not English," in the way that a Tuscan teacher might tell his pupils

that it is "not Italian" to pronounce "*casa*" as "*hasa*." Likewise, we can't imagine that in America the accents used by newscasters might become a matter for heated public discussion, as they have at times in Germany and Italy.

Our linguistic values, being so particular to English, are by no means absolute or immutable. They must change, as they have already changed, along with the social composition of the English-speaking world. It was because of sweeping social changes in the eighteenth century that our present system of values arose. The new values were created in part by the rise of the middle class, with a corresponding increase in literacy; in part by the importation of the German-speaking Hanover court; and in part by the new conception of English as the language that extended over the whole of Great Britain and then the colonies. An immediate effect of these changes was the emergence of a new intellectual class, independent of aristocratic patronage, which came to cultural authority. As the critic Leo Braudy has pointed out, the members of this group were largely outsiders: Scots like Hume, Smollett, and Adam Smith; Irishmen like Burke, Goldsmith, Steele, and Swift; Catholics like Alexander Pope; and middle-class provincials like Gay, Johnson, and Sterne. If they did not manage to, as they put it, "ascertain" the English language in a fixed form for all time, they did at least succeed in establishing the linguistic ground rules that would hold for the next two hundred years.

The eighteenth-century grammarians accepted the doctrine that usage was the final arbiter of correctness; what they debated was whose usage and why. Before their time, it had been the speech of the aristocrats, the court, and the clergy that set standards, and the correctness of a usage was judged by the social prestige of the speakers who adopted it. The new grammarians argued the superiority of literary precedents, which they recorded and annotated in new dictionaries and grammars. These models were more permanent and more democratic than speech, since the great writers were chosen not by ancestry but by natural ability and public esteem.

Unlike their Continental contemporaries, the English grammarians rejected the notion that national institutions should have any role in determining the models of correct usage. In 1712, Swift had seconded earlier suggestions by Dryden and others that an English academy be established, on the model of the Italian and French ones, and only the fall of the Tory government prevented his plan from being realized. By mid-century, however, the idea was generally opposed, as inconsistent with what Johnson called "the spirit of English liberty." Johnson's *Dictionary*, in fact, was widely hailed as a vindication of the superiority of free institutions over Continental absolutism. As Garrick wrote:

And Johnson, well armed like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more.

From its inception, then, the modern doctrine of good usage was associated with progressive ideals.

For the grammarians of the Age of Reason, the advantage of literary models was that their superiority could be defended by appeals to logic and sensibility. For the first time, a distinction was made between those parts of grammar that could be rationalized—diction, syntax, and the like—and those parts, like pronunciation, that were left to be ruled by arbitrary fashion. Modern techniques of grammatical argument were introduced in this period: justification by logic, by literary precedent, by analogy, and by etymology. In fact, a good many of the specific dictates of prescriptive grammar were introduced then. It may be either consoling or disheartening to realize that grammarians have been railing for more than two hundred years against usages like *It's me*, *the tallest of the two*, and *the man who I saw*, with no sign of a resolution either way. (The grammarians have won some battles over the years—most notably against the innocuous *ain't*, which educated speakers now use only in a jocular way. They have lost others, such as the fight to maintain a distinction between *shall* and *will*, which never really caught on outside of England.)

THE BASIC LINGUISTIC VALUES ESTABLISHED IN THE eighteenth century were rarely challenged over the next hundred and fifty years. (In Jacksonian America, there was a brief reaction against the imposition of Old World grammatical values, but this was little more than a provincial rebellion, and it subsided, with the rest of such populism, by the Gilded Age.) It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that the traditional doctrines were rejected by a significant part of the cultural elite. In the forefront of the attack were the "structural linguists," as they then styled themselves. The battle culminated in the brouhaha over the publication in 1961 of *Webster's Third New International*, which refused to label usages like *ain't* and *to contact* as incorrect or even colloquial. Despite the fulminations of Dwight Macdonald and Jacques Barzun (and Nero Wolfe, who burned his copy page by page), the linguists succeeded in convincing most of the educational establishment of the rightness of their views. But they could not sway the body of educated public opinion; hence the cold war that endures to this day.

Defenders of the grammatical old order often speak of the linguists as a cabal of intriguers who have singlehandedly undermined traditional values. Jacques Barzun wrote that "modern linguists bear a grave responsibility . . . for the state of the language as we find it in the centers of culture," and Wilson Follett (writing in *The Atlantic*) referred to the editors of *Webster's Third* as "the patient and dedicated saboteurs in Springfield." Like most other conspiracy theories, this one is a little paranoid. The linguists could have had so wide an effect on the attitudes of educators only by addressing areas of general concern. In fact,

the linguists based their attack on two sound points that appealed to the public's growing respect for science and increased awareness of cultural pluralism. First, every language is a complex system with an internal logic, the full understanding of which requires scientific investigation. And second, since nonstandard forms of English possess internal logic just as standard English does, they are not inherently inferior; rather, the doctrines of prescriptive grammar reflect covert class prejudice and racism.

Now, as I said earlier, I think that linguists have been wrong in their conclusions about the value of traditional grammar. But no one can come away from an examination of recent research on grammar unaware that the study of language is complex and technically demanding, and that each language system has its own intricacies. For example, I have already mentioned the complications involved in us-

but he had exquisite intuitions about what sounded right and, more important, the capacity to reflect on these intuitions in a reasoned way. It is not important that he was unsuccessful in formulating general rules that would specify exactly when *everyone* must be followed by *he*, and when a plural verb should follow a collective noun. When grammar consists of nothing but such rules, in fact, it becomes frozen and useless, because there are always cases that the rules do not cover, or in which two rules contradict each other. (Should we say *We have each taken his coat* or . . . *our coats*? *It is he whom I was going to see* or . . . *him whom* . . . ? Only the ear knows.) What Fowler does teach is an approach to grammatical problems that can be cranked up anew for each situation. In the end, that is what all good writers rely on. Linguistics can help here; it provides a language for talking about language (a "meta-



ing singular pronouns with antecedents like *everyone* and *anyone*: the rules of English allow us to say *Everyone has taken his coat* but not *Everyone left, didn't he?* Linguists have puzzled a great deal over examples like these, in an effort to understand the basic workings of English syntax; it is small wonder that they should have little patience with popular grammarians who blithely proclaim that the whole problem is simple, except for the thickheaded. They react as an economist might on hearing a political candidate announce that we can stop inflation by increasing the purity of the silver in our coinage.

It may be true that only those with technical expertise can begin to understand the workings of language—and even to them, many of the basic issues remain as controversial as the causes of inflation. Still, it does not follow that the layman cannot decide for himself what is right and wrong. From the point of view of modern linguistics, Fowler knew very little about the mechanics of grammar,

language,” in the trade), which is much more precise than the mysterious and dimly remembered classifications of traditional grammar. (Terms like “predicate nominative” may have a limited applicability to Latin, but they were not very useful for talking about English even in the days when educated speakers were presumed to have some familiarity with the classical languages.) But we should no more ask linguistic scientists to tell us what sounds best than we should ask economists to tell us which distribution of property will be fairest; those matters are for us to decide.

The linguists are right in their second point, as well, that traditional linguistic values have long been mixed up with class prejudice. The eighteenth-century grammarians were hardly defenders of the system of hereditary privilege, but they did accept the speech of the upper middle class as a basis for the literary language. Until the twentieth century, in fact, grammarians rarely criticized

the speech of the working classes; they simply assumed that their readers knew better than to talk like *that*. (As G. K. Chesterton said, "A man does not walk down the street giving a haughty twirl to his moustaches at the thought of his superiority to some variety of deep-sea fishes.") So the dictates of traditional grammar were intended only for a small literate class, which already spoke a fairly uniform dialect. It was not until the twentieth century that the hegemony of middle-class speech was challenged, as a result of mass education and of the collapse of the homogeneous social elite—the "Protestant establishment," as E. Digby Baltzell has called it—that had dominated mores and culture until World War I.

Minority and working-class children must, as a purely practical first measure, learn the speech habits that happen to have been adopted by the middle class. What linguists have not understood, however, is that standard English and good English are different things. It is still possible to distinguish in principle between the crass hypocrisy that leads us to try to get ghetto children to talk like the children of stockbrokers and the higher and more arduous calling that leads us to try to get the children of stockbrokers to write like James Baldwin. But it is only so long as we bear that distinction in mind—so long as attacks on the "slovenliness" of ghetto English still raise our hackles—that we are entitled to try to resuscitate the enterprise of grammar with a clear conscience.

WE CAN REVIVE GRAMMATICAL VALUES ONLY IF we can make them consistent with our other social values, so that we can argue from moral principles that are as unexceptionable and familiar to us as the etiquette for addressing servants was to Fowler's original readers. There is no point in my trying to justify a usage to my students by an appeal to some musty, Arnoldian ideal of culture. They will listen politely and forget the whole matter before they log onto the computer to write their next term papers. They have nothing to be nostalgic about, and I can't make a good case for any sort of attention to grammar unless I am willing to accept the universe that they quite contentedly inhabit.

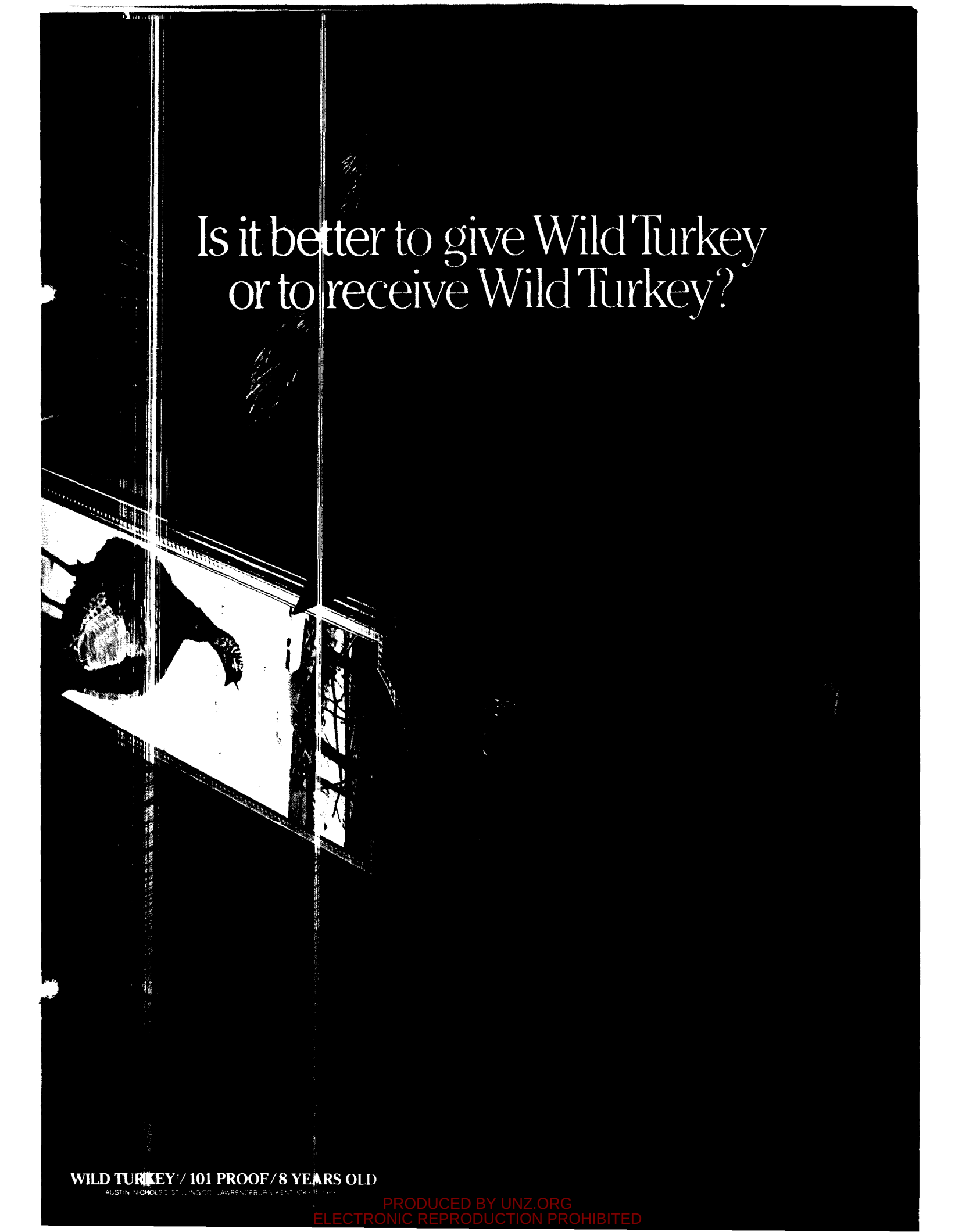
In the first place, we have to recognize that literature has lost the kind of public importance that it had in Johnson's or Arnold's day. Although more people than ever are functionally literate, few are literate in the high sense of the word, and those who are can't expect other people to be. (There is an old joke about the days when the British universities were thoroughly corrupt, and a dissolute young aristocrat could pass his exams by answering the question "Now then, Lord Arthur, who dragged whom around the walls of what?" Nowadays, we would take a correct answer as fair proof of successful completion of a major in humanities.) It is not that people don't read novels and such. They do, probably more than ever, but only

for the pleasure of it. There is no canon—no books that everyone expects everybody to have read, or to be able to pretend to have read—that can serve as a common reference point in discussions of social values. The effects of all this on the way we think about and use the language are by now irreversible.

Take the way we talk about character. People who used to be vain, wrathful, self-reliant, sullen, or driven are now narcissistic, hostile, secure, passive-aggressive, or obsessive (more or less). To know what the old words meant, we went to Jane Austen and Thackeray; to understand the new ones, we take psychology courses. (The extent to which the new order has become established was brought home to me by a sentence in a recent article in *Commentary* on delinquency. The author ridiculed the jargon with which social workers describe delinquents, then concluded: "In short, he is what the layman would call a sociopath.") Psychoanalysis is unlikely to be repealed; people are not going to go back to reading novels in order to understand themselves and their lives.

The decline of literature has already been acknowledged implicitly in the general case made for good usage. Men like Johnson and Arnold hoped that the refinement of English would lead to the perfection of literature and culture, but modern thinkers are more likely to sound a political or civic theme. The most widely cited of all twentieth-century essays on the language is Orwell's *Politics and the English Language*, the burden of which is that sloppy language makes for sloppy thinking and leads to totalitarianism: "If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. . . . Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." In the same vein, Auden wrote of the language, "when it's corrupted, people lose faith in what they hear, and that leads to violence." Similar rhetoric has come from Edwin Newman, Joseph Epstein, Dwight Macdonald, and dozens of others. When English was thought of as the medium through which we arrived at a common set of cultural values, the archetype of English prose was the critical essay. Today, English is above all the medium for our political discussions, and we look to writing about political and social issues for our models of prose style. Yet in the public schools instruction in composition is still considered chiefly the business of English teachers, who continue to make the writing of "book reports" the centerpiece of their program. Professors of philosophy or history may complain about the state of student writing, but most would not dream of taking a hand in remedying the problem.

The declining importance of literature is tied as well to the changing role of written language as a medium of public information. When the eighteenth-century grammarians insisted that writing, not speech, must be the model for good usage, they were on solidly democratic ground, for

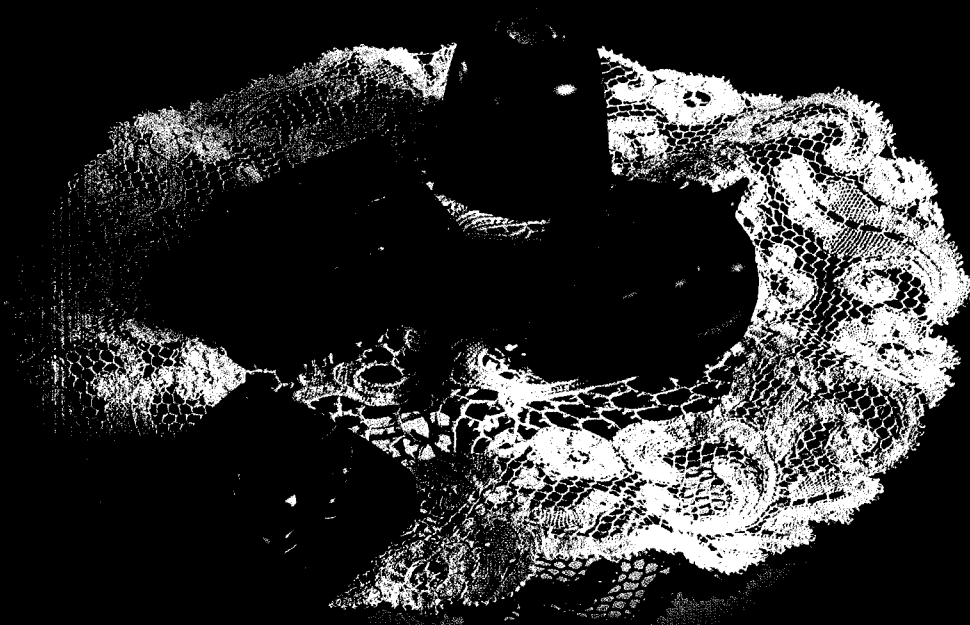


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a spoken model could be familiar only to a small group of people connected by personal ties and could be broadcast only inefficiently, through plays and sermons. Written models could reach a much larger public. But now, thanks to radio and television, the spoken language has once again become the medium of the broadest public discussion, especially as regards the political and civic aspects of our lives. If we hew to the same democratic principles that led the eighteenth-century grammarians to insist upon the primacy of writing, we will accord more importance to the spoken language. Writing is not about to wither away, to be sure. The doomsayers who see in television the death of literacy sound very much like the nineteenth-century critics who thought that photography would be the end of painting. But television and radio are now the principal means for disseminating political information to a large public. Consequently, it is increasingly important for people to know how to listen critically and how to evaluate spoken arguments. Yet here again, the public-school curriculum and grammar books are largely unchanged. Instruction in speaking and listening, where it is given at all, still tends to take as its model the Lincoln-Douglas debates, rather than *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour*.

NOWADAYS, IT IS COMMON TO THROW ALL LINGUISTIC vices into the same hopper. The typical state-of-the-language essay begins by citing a misuse of *disinterested* and then jumps to an example of bureaucratic jargon or of faulty verb agreement, as if each error consigned the writer to the same circle of hell. But the eighteenth-century grammarians were careful to distinguish among several different types of linguistic vices (and, by implication, of linguistic virtues). In particular, they set off *barbarisms*, expressions that could not legitimately be used in serious writing; *solecisms*, which were offenses against their ideas of logic; and *improprieties*, or mistakes in diction.

Barbarisms seem at first to have been a diffuse class, which included the use in polite discourse of foreign expressions, of archaisms, of "low cant" and "provincial idioms," and of the newly coined jargon of philosophers and theologians, a category later expanded to include the language of the sciences, both real and self-styled. What all barbarisms ostensibly had in common was that they offended against the idea that good usage must be "reputable, national, and present," as the great eighteenth-century rhetorician George Campbell put it. But some words that fail to meet these criteria have always escaped the epithet. It is only in our discourse about certain topics that we have objected to the importation of words from communities outside the general literate public. Take French expressions, until recently a matter of great concern. Campbell attacked the use of *politesse*, *hauteur*, and *belles lettres*; a hundred and fifty years later, Fowler ridiculed the use of *jeu de mots*, *flâneur*, and *dernier ressort*. But

has anyone ever objected to *à la carte*, *pas de deux*, or *ménage à trois*? There are certain cultural categories that we insist on defining for ourselves, but when it comes to the arts of cooking, dance, and love, we readily defer to the authority of the French.

The barbarisms that concern modern critics are quite different from those that bothered Campbell or Fowler. No one now troubles over the use of archaisms like *peradventure* and *anon*, for the language is scarcely threatened by an unwholesome excess of gentility, as it was in the nineteenth century. And the use of an unassimilated French word is at worst regarded as an annoying affectation, in part because French culture is not as important a model as it once was, and in part because the practice is no longer intimidating—not only do people not know French but they are not even ashamed of not knowing French.

One type of barbarism that does rile modern critics is borrowings from technical usage—one aspect of the tendency to refashion the language on the model of scientific discourse. For the most part, the borrowing is natural and inevitable—what else would you call a minicomputer or a quasar? And no one objects to the use of terms from economics like *money supply* and *productivity*. But we raise the roof when bureaucrats and administrators introduce verbs like *prioritize*, *source*, *implement*, and *input* as if their procedures were as technically intricate and as inaccessible to common understanding as the workings of computers or the money market. And now that we justify linguistic values in political terms, we find no offense so heinous as the use of jargon by politicians, who call invasions "incursions" and tax increases "revenue enhancement"—the sorts of usages that so bothered Orwell.

But while critics are heated in their condemnation of such usages, they are rarely explicit about the reasons for their objections. Why is it all right for a politician to use *capital-intensive*, once a technical term of economics, but not *revenue enhancement*? Why have we allowed a term like *juvenile delinquent* to pass from sociology into general usage while we continue to resist, say, the newer *juvenile offender*, or *person in need of supervision* (also known as a *PINS*)? The critics say that the offending barbarisms are pretentious and unnecessary replacements for "perfectly ordinary English words." But the new words do have new meanings. The change from *juvenile delinquent* to *PINS* reflects basic changes in court procedures and a finer set of legal gradations for offenders. The real problem is that these new categories do not seem to correspond to the categories that we would have rationally constructed. The discrepancy between "bureaucratic jargon" and "straight English" is just the discrepancy between our understanding of the things that states or institutions should do and their understanding of the necessary procedures. I don't mean to say that jargon never serves dishonesty or obscurantism, but those have always been with us. The general concern over political jargon now—a concern felt through-

out the West—reflects mostly dismay over the difficulty in maintaining democratic control of public institutions in the face of the increasingly intricate workings of the modern state. President Reagan goes on TV to defend his tax program; he can speak either of “loopholes” or of, say, “fiscal incentives.” In the first case, he is giving us what sounds like straight talk, but we may suspect him of vulgar demagoguery, for we know that things are more complicated than that. In the second case, he may be accused of using jargon, and we may doubt whether he really has our interests at heart. Think hard about our objections to political jargon and you will be led to consider a fundamental modern political problem: What is an “informed” electorate in this age, and how does it get that way?

If critics have a social responsibility to resist jargon, they are on shakier ground when they take on certain other usages that would have been barbarisms in the traditional scheme of things. They would be wise to say nothing about true slang, the special language of linguistically disenfranchised groups like the young, the minorities, and the underworld. It is absurd for Joseph Epstein to take on *honky*, or for the members of the *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage* panel to be asked whether they approve of a usage like *I can't cope*. Asking middle-class critics to rule on such matters is like asking me as a linguist to pronounce on whether Frank Robinson uses *squeeze play* correctly. But the “vogue words” of the middle class are a legitimate concern, if not one on quite the same level as political jargon. Lately, we have had to deal with a profusion of “psychobabble” expressions, like *meaningful*, *in a good space*, and so on. I recently received an announcement of a seminar on “Optimizing Productivity and High-Level Wellness,” and, on reflection, I think my grimace was morally defensible. But what is the basis for our instinctive distaste for this sort of talk? In calling it “babble,” we imply that it is just meaningless noise, used by people who have neither the intelligence nor the character to consider their condition in any depth. That misses the point, I think. If there is a real basis for objecting to such expressions, it is that they do have meanings and that the expressions carry along with them a picture of the self that in the critics' view is illegitimate. Take the word *life-style*, which I mentioned before. The word sticks in Joseph Epstein's craw too, and one of the things that makes Epstein an interesting critic of the language is that he does not stop at merely reporting his disdain:

The objection to the word “lifestyle” is that it is at too many removes from reality; in its contemporary usage are implied a number of assumptions about life that are belied by experience. Chief among these is an assumption about the absolute plasticity of character—change your lifestyle, change your life—that is simply not true; and the popularity of the word “lifestyle” is testimony to how much people want to believe it.

Epstein has hit on the sensibility that underlies the current use of *life-style*, but his argument leaves an important

question unanswered: what is wrong with having the word? After all, there really are life-styles. Some people choose to have split-level houses and Ford station wagons, while others have condos with wet bars and drive Porsches, and if that isn't a difference of style, what is it? Would anyone object if we talked about “the Southern California style of living”? The difference is that in giving a one-word name to a category, we make it into a kind of primary concept, which is presumed to have a basic place in our overall scheme of things. That is the intimation about *life-style* that bothers Epstein—and me.

CRITICS HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES TO BE RELATIVELY flexible in their resistance to barbarisms. If the word *life-style* manages to survive for another generation, it is unlikely that anyone will still be bothered by it. (Who is there under fifty who minds the use of *contact* and *process* as verbs, usages that set Wilson Follett's teeth on edge a mere twenty years ago?) By contrast, the canon of solecisms has remained largely the same over the years. These are violations of the rules of verb agreement, pronoun case, and so on, rules that are supposed to ensure that prose will be constructed logically. The word *logic* can mean several things. A discourse is logical if its conclusions follow from its premises, but that has nothing to do with the grammatical construction of its sentences. Provided that it is logical, in this sense, to say *Everyone who leaves after six will miss his train*, it is equally logical to finish the sentence . . . *will miss their train*. The notion of logic at stake in the discussion of solecisms has to do with syntax, not sense: a plural subject is logically followed by a plural verb; two negatives logically make a positive; a pronoun following a form of the verb *to be* is logically in the nominative case. But linguists have been at some pains to point out that this sense of *logic* is a curious one, if only because, unlike our sense of what constitutes a well-formed argument, it varies from one language to another. Two negatives do not make a positive in French or Italian, for example, nor does French use the nominative case after *to be*. Would we really want to argue that these languages are less logical than English? And if not, why do we insist that there is something illogical about the English sentences *It's me*, or *I didn't see none*? What is more, we seem to apply the rules of logic somewhat selectively. Surely it is illogical to say *More than one student has failed the exam* (or *Fewer than two have passed*), but what grammarian would try to fly in the face of established usage here?

The linguists are right in all of this, and right as well in saying that such rules serve little communicative purpose; *It's me* is no less clear than *It is I*. But it is precisely because these rules are arbitrary and difficult to observe that they may once have had a certain usefulness as exercises, for they force the writer to pay more attention to his syntax than mere communication would require.

Take those old bugbears *who* and *whom*. To get your *whoms* in the right place, you may have to look half a dozen clauses down the pike, as in a phrase like *the man whom many thought the general staff would have asked the president to appoint a committee to investigate*. And in writing, certainly there are benefits to knowing how a sentence is going to end before you get there. That is what Lionel Trilling had in mind, I surmise, when he wrote in defense of the distinction that "the difficulty it entails is of a kind the confrontation of which tends to build character, and in our cultural situation we need all the character we can get." The trouble is that we really don't need that much character when writing or reading modern prose. The *who-whom* rule may have had a sound basis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when convoluted Augustan sentences were common and when the model for good English was exclusively the written language. It requires much more planning of the structure of the sentence to write like Johnson or Arnold than it does to write like Hemingway or to compose an op-ed piece for the *Times*.

A better case can be made for some of the rules determining solecisms that operate within a single clause. Adherence to subject-verb agreement continues to be a good exercise, though it is important to note both that this rule too fails to serve real logic and that there are dialects of English (as well as many other languages) that do not bother with it. Still more useful are the rules and strategies that inarguably help to make a discourse coherent and easy to follow: the injunctions against, for example, dangling modifiers and the use of pronouns with vague or confusing referents. It's not just that the observation of these rules makes a text more "readable," as E.D. Hirsch, Jr., puts it, though that is reason enough for insisting on them. The rules also help to remind us of the differences between

private and public talk. A student writes, "He watches Claudius praying, wondering whether to kill him"; the offending clause is underlined. "But it's clear what I meant!" And so it is. In friendly conversation, we scatter dangling modifiers at will and stick in a *this* or an *it* whose referent is nowhere spoken but is easily recovered against the familiar background. It is only in the neutral context of public discourse that we have to be careful and explicit. The extreme case is in the public print, where writer and reader are at an indeterminate remove from each other. Because we first learn our language almost entirely in intimate contexts, we have to make an effort to acquire the awareness needed for communication across contexts in which little can be taken for granted.

This takes us to an important observation about the value of grammatical rules of all kinds. Critics and grammarians spend most of their time talking about the obligations of the writer or speaker to the reader or listener. But most people never so much as write a letter to the editor, much less appear on *Meet the Press*. Why should we make such a fuss over the rules, then? Why not simply give special instruction to journalism majors and let the others off the hook? The fact is that instruction in public speaking and writing, particularly regarding clarity, is most important as an indirect way of teaching people to listen and read. Beyond the first steps of teaching children to sound out their letters, there is not a lot we can do to help people read better (which does not as a rule mean faster). Yet between the acquisition of the elementary skills and the ability to make sense of ordinary public prose there is an enormous gap—something that is just becoming clear to psychologists and linguists looking at literacy. For someone accustomed only to face-to-face communication and personal letters, it is virtually impossible to recover the sense of a magazine article written by somebody miles and



months away. (The linguist Jerrold Sadock has noted the complexity of the inferences associated even with simple instructions like "Wet hair, lather, rinse, repeat," which we would paraphrase in ordinary English as "First you wet your hair, then you lather it with this stuff, then you rinse it off, then you lather again—your hair is already wet now, after all—and then you rinse the stuff off again.") The best way to learn the skills of reading and listening that everybody needs in order to participate fully in society is to imitate the skills of writing and speaking that only a few will ever have to practice for their own sake.

THE "IMPROPRIETIES" OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR are the usages that arise out of the natural drift of the meanings of words in the standard vocabulary. The list of them has changed over the years, though less rapidly than the list of barbarisms. The eighteenth-century grammarians objected to the confusion of *ceremonious* and *ceremonial*, and to the use of *demean* to mean "debase" rather than simply "behave"; their twentieth-century counterparts have seized on the confusion of *disinterested* and *uninterested*, the use of *presently* to mean "now," and the use of *hopefully* as a sentence adverb. What is at issue in such cases is the extent of the debt we owe to precedent. Obviously we are not bound to use the language just as it was used a hundred years ago, but neither is it in our interest to change the language willy-nilly if we want to ensure the continuity of our discourse. Faced with a particular change, then, we need rules of thumb. I submit that the two questions we ought to ask are: Does it involve any real loss? and Is there anything we can do about it?

Invoking the first of these criteria, we will lament the progressive loss of the *disinterested-uninterested* distinction. *Unbiased* and *impartial* will not do the work that *disinterested* used to be reserved for. But there is no point making a fuss about this change, because it was forgone that *disinterested* would lose its older sense once *interested* lost the sense of "having a stake in," which we retain only in the fixed phrase *interested party*. Even if *disinterested* had survived intact, therefore, it would eventually have become one of those curious asymmetric negatives like *untoward* and *disgrace*, whose senses are not recoverable as the sum of their parts. Invoking the second criterion, we should be prepared to admit that the fight on behalf of *disinterested* is a "lost cause," as Trilling described it. This may be an occasion for regret, but indignation would be out of place. Isaac Asimov writes, "I'm very proud of knowing the distinction, and insist on it, correcting others freely." The fact that being familiar with a distinction can be a cause for self-congratulation is, however, reason to eliminate it from the canons of standard usage, which should not be repositories of grammatical arcana.

I am more puzzled by the resistance to the newer use of

hopefully, because here I cannot discern any loss whatsoever. Most of the members of the *Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage* panel who condemn it give no reason at all: Shana Alexander calls it "slack-jawed, common, sleazy"; Phyllis McGinley says it is an abomination, whose adherents should be lynched; Harold Taylor says it makes him physically ill; and so on. Now, I do not doubt the sincerity of these passions, but I wonder what arouses them. Some say the problem is that the adverb doesn't modify the verb in a sentence like *Hopefully, it will be done by Monday*. But why does *hopefully* get singled out when the same point could be made about various uses of *mercifully*, *frankly*, *happily*, *primarily*, and dozens of other words? In fact, Follett has suggested that what is wrong with *hopefully*—and *sorrowfully*, *thankfully*, and others—is that they "lack point of view; they fail to tell us who does the hoping, the sorrowing, or the being thankful." But that would seem to be a virtue, which *hopefully* shares with a number of other, unexceptionable expressions (*apparently*, *obviously*, *with luck*, and *alas*, for example). As Robert Crichton puts it, "No one cares if *I* hope the war is over. . . ." Follett suggests that the "natural way to express what is meant" is *it is to be hoped*, which achieves the same impersonality at a cost of excruciating stiltedness. Obviously, I have missed something—there has to be a reason for all the vehemence—but I am sure that the point is too nice for the mass of American speakers who have adopted the new usage with no communicative ill effects.

I have spent time on these two cases because they seem to bring out the worst in language critics. But I would not want to claim that there are no improprieties worth bothering about. Take the often-remarked use of *literally* to mean "figuratively" (as in *We were so bored we were literally climbing the walls*). Unlike the recent problems with *hopefully* and *disinterested*, this tangle has been around at least since Fowler's time. If *literally* were going to shift its meaning, then, it would have done so long ago; the fact that it has hung on in its etymological sense is an indication that people are willing to reform their usage when the rationale is explained to them. Unlike *disinterested*, which has become opaque as the meaning of one of its parts has shifted, *literally* is opaque only because the form of its parts is hidden. Once the connection with *letter* is made, the correct usage makes perfect sense. In short, this is an example of an impropriety that both should and can be corrected, since people have continued to find the distinction worth making, and have gone on to make it. Not that the misuse of *literally* will ever vanish; the error is as natural as the tendency to correct it on reflection. I think it is not always sufficiently appreciated that the battles over grammar, like other battles for souls, are won at the individual level. It should be a source of satisfaction that the grammar books of a hundred years hence will be decrying to good effect the tendency to misuse *literally*, or to confuse *imply* and *infer*.



Beyond the revision of traditional categories, new social conditions call for attention to aspects of language that the earlier grammarians were indifferent to. Take the spoken language. Some recent critics have been sensitive, with good reason, to the misuse of the particles we use to orient the flow of talk, things like *I mean*, *really*, and *you know*. Joseph Epstein has taken on what he calls "the California Hey," and Edwin Newman, among others, has reviled *you know*. But it is not enough to say, as Newman does, that *you know* is just an empty substitute for saying what one means. The expression has legitimate functions, such as to mark off information of which the hearer ought already to be aware (*You know, this is the fourth time I've had to call about this account*). In ordinary private conversation, the background of information we have in common is usually rich enough to enable us to fill in what is intended; and here we rarely bother to notice whether *you know* is being used appropriately or not.

I find that I am struck by the misuse of the expression only when I am listening to public discourses: radio call-in shows and TV interviews, for example. What is otherwise a natural appeal to a shared background is distressing in such contexts precisely because we can no longer take so much for granted: we don't know who the speakers are, as we do in face-to-face conversation, and we can't ask them for clarification.

It is only in recent times that we have had reason to criticize the abuse of particles like *you know*, with the rise of the once unimaginable genre of public conversation. Of course, the ultimate point of the criticism is not the improvement of the quality of talk-show contributions. Rather, just as an attention to avoiding dangling modifiers in writing exercises helps teach us to read intelligently, an awareness of the abuse of *you know* may make us better listeners to public forums.

I WOULD BE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT ANY READER agreed with all the judgments about usage that I have offered here. But uniformity of linguistic values is neither necessary nor desirable. It is unnecessary because what choice we make about *hopefully*, *whom*, or any other particular point of usage matters very little; specific cases are supposed to serve simply as parables to guide our thinking about usage in general. It is undesirable because it can be achieved only through rigid codification, which makes all further discussion pointless. We should not suppose that the schools can teach linguistic values by a simple return to "basics." If we mean by basics an increase in the attention paid to reading and writing, well and good. But the very word *basics*, with its implication that what is lacking is simple rote skills, on the order of the mastery of spelling or the multiplication tables, surely would have set Johnson or Fowler to shuddering. The aspects of usage (and mathematics) that really matter are not learned easily and are not learned early.

What we need now is not more invective—we have had plenty of that—but a return to civil discussion of the problems of grammar and their social importance. If the eighteenth century was the great age of English grammar, it was because problems of usage were considered worthy of serious consideration by the best minds of the day, from Pope and Johnson to Lord Chesterfield and Joseph Priestley. (Their work became the models for school grammars, and we can hope that if the discussion is renewed, its results will sift down to the classroom.) Only three ground rules are needed for such a discussion: it should be well informed, it should be nonpartisan, and it should be backed by a measure of courage and tolerance. By well-informed, I mean that the parties must have a certain sophistication about language and its uses. This is not to say that only linguists need apply. In fact, linguists as a class

are no more sensitive to nuances of usage than mathematicians or chemists; they tend to regard prose as a necessary evil that serves only to smooth the transition from one formalism to the next. But it is impossible to talk intelligently about the language nowadays without having an idea of what the program of modern linguistics is all about, in the same way that it is impossible to talk intelligently about the economy without an idea of what it is that economists do. And there is a lot to be learned as well from philosophers and logicians, not to mention the anthropologists and psychologists who have been studying the effects that literacy works on society and individual consciousness. The expertise of these participants will not take the place of sensitivity to the language that a familiarity with literature instills, but that sensitivity alone cannot sustain the discussion.

In saying that the discussion must be nonpartisan, I mean not that it should have nothing to do with ideology but that it should be extricated from the kind of left-right polarization in which it has lately been mired. One of the greatest of Johnson's accomplishments was that he managed to raise the question of the language above partisan politics. (Fifty years earlier, Swift's proposal for an academy had been denounced as a Tory plot.) After Johnson, it was understood that what was under discussion was the rules that both sides would accept in order to continue their debate. The only way for the consideration of grammar to become once again a matter for general discussion will be for everyone to realize that all sides have a stake in coming to terms, and to eliminate from the discourse such epithets as "permissive," "liberal," and "left-wing" on the one hand, and "repressive," "reactionary," and "right-wing" on the other.

There will always be points of usage on which grammar and political principle find themselves at odds, such as the *everyone . . . he* business. But debates in these cases are not over which usage is grammatically preferable; rather they are over the relative strength of the claims that grammatical and other principles have on us. Grammarians should no more decide these issues for all than physicists should decide whether we ought to have a space program. We must come to our own conclusions. For example, I stick with *he* as an impersonal pronoun, except where sex neutrality is important. I think there are good syntactic reasons for my choice, though I know syntacticians who would disagree with me. But grammar can only excuse my usage, not justify it, and all its arguments are irrelevant for people who have decided to go with the use of *they* on the grounds that *he* is sexist. As Fowler maintained, matters of conscience must take precedence.

This takes me to the third requirement that a new discussion of values must satisfy—the question of courage

and tolerance. When I ask myself why I have decided to stick with the use of the singular *he* to refer to an antecedent like *every American*, I find that my motives are unclear. Intuition tells me that the singular makes grammatical sense. But I am troubled that English grammar requires the singular to be of one gender or another, and that precedent requires it to be masculine. And I have sometimes supposed that it is only out of fear of being thought ignorant that I don't move to using *they* and *their* in all cases. If this is indeed my motivation, then I am like the character of whom Randall Jarrell wrote: "She always said *to paint the lily*: she knew that this was a commonplace phrase and that the memory of mankind had transfigured it, and she was contemptuous of people who said *to paint the lily*—just as she was contemptuous, in a different way, of people who said *to gild the lily*—but she couldn't bear to have anyone think that she didn't know which one it really was." It isn't easy to flout a rule that many people set great store by, even when there are ideological reasons for doing so; it is harder still when one's only reason is that the rule does not seem to make much sense anymore. As Fowler said, one must "deliberately [reject] the trammels of convention" to consciously split an infinitive. The trouble with indiscriminate conformity to traditional strictures is that it can become a form of appeasement, in which we find ourselves "placating the kind of extremist who does not deserve to be placated," in Simon's words. It is by exploiting our insecurities and our well-intentioned reluctance to give offense that purists have been able to exercise their unwarranted tyranny over usage and to block any serious re-evaluation.

Of course, it is not only out of cowardice that we may want to adhere to rules that seem unjustified. Civility must be kept in mind when considering usage; that is what gave "polite prose" its name. Once there is a wide consensus that a certain usage is preferable, it behooves us to conform to it out of deference to public opinion, particularly if our private objections are only grammatical, with no basis in principle. Furthermore, there is a clear risk of irresponsibility in counseling others to disregard rules that they may be judged by. Finally, we don't want to underestimate the importance of nostalgia as a conservative force. I myself do not use *disinterested* to mean "uninterested," not because I think it is a sin to do so but because I am fond of the older sense of the word. We all have our "bower-birds' treasures," as Fowler called them, which are no more harmful than any other antiquated mannerisms it may please us to affect. But we would do best to reserve these for our personal usage manuals, recognizing a distinction between the private decisions that we come to about usage and the public course we counsel. Where we cannot be bold, we can at least be tolerant. □

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"I could go for something Gordon's"

The possibilities are endless



THE BLINDING LIGHT OF THE MIND

A SHORT STORY BY JANE SMILEY

A BOMB, GERSHIN THOUGHT, WOULD SURELY HIT the air base thirty miles south. How had he overlooked that air base when considering his job at the law firm that now employed him? Why had he stopped in Illinois? Why hadn't he gone farther west, to Montana or Idaho? They'd never bomb those places. Or the bomb might fall off-target, randomly closer to Gershin or farther away. His house had a lovely southern exposure and hardly any basement to speak of (to live in for a month, six months, a lifetime). Upon hearing of the incoming missiles—assuming the presence of a radio or television, something he couldn't always count on—he would have seventeen minutes. The law firm was in a building with a capacious basement. Gershin often imagined himself there with Miss Tappow, Mrs. Hadley, Fran Huppert, and Emmett Colby, the senior partner, but he didn't know what they would do there. More frequently, he imagined running or driving (he couldn't decide which was quicker) to the Catholic church where his daughter, Nicole, went to pre-school. While he wouldn't care to be on the streets at zero second, even if the missile achieved its goal and hit the base (only) thirty miles away, it was more disturbing to contemplate three-year-old Nicole left to the kindness of strangers when he, her father, might easily get to her and embrace her with minutes to spare.

As he buttered her toast, Nicole said, "I would appreciate wearing a dress today." Gershin smiled at her condescending tone. "Okay," he said, "but tights, too. It's beginning to get cold." She pressed her spoon down on top of the eggs in front of her, chanting,

"Five little monkeys jumping on the bed,
Melissa fell off and bumped her head—"

She put a spoonful in her mouth and began to chew. She was a good eater.

On the other hand, the pre-school teachers were well trained, and the church, too, had a deep and roomy basement. How soon after zero second, assuming the blast was thirty or fifty miles away, could they all come up and find one another? Would Nicole remember him? Forgive him for not being there? Love him still? Today he was tempted to take her to the office.

As a child, he had imagined himself escaping to the woods or the mountains with his wax-dipped matches and his ball of twine and his chain of safety pins, but now he was a homeowner and a lawyer. He wondered if he would have the sense to close his eyes, hide his sight, avoid blistering his retinas, and if Nicole, on a walk with her playmates, would inevitably turn toward the great light, curious. He did not really care about surviving; nor did he fear, in the long run, death itself. What he feared, what subdivided and multiplied in his mind, was those final seventeen minutes—the explosion of knowledge and shock and grief and horror and decision and action and regret and love—

Nicole said, "Yesterday Melissa fell off the swing and she cried."

"Did she hurt herself?"

"No."

Gershin tried to imagine Melissa, the best friend, falling off the swing, but he could not. His fear was like a large cardboard box inside his head, empty but bulky, leaving room for little else. When he kissed Nicole good-bye and watched her climb the steps to the open door and the teacher, he realized that he had again forgotten to brush her hair. He wondered if only fathers forgot hair, or only fathers who couldn't stop thinking about thermal burn zones and central firestorms. He walked to work, lighting his first cigarette of the morning, covering at a leisurely pace the same ground he would take in a run, going the other direction, at the first hint of the attack.

Once, his office had been merely his office, pleasant when he had interesting work to do, drab when his work grew tedious. He had furnished it himself with a chair, a table, a lamp, and a rug that he remembered liking. By now, though, he had stared so hard at everything in the room while trying to disassemble his fears that the fears seemed imprinted on everything he looked at, even on the changing colors of the Japanese maples outside and the greenish pitched roof of the building across the street. He always wondered how much radiation the maples could survive and whether, dying, they would begin to turn, as they were doing now, or whether the leaves would simply drop. And that roof was so old, attached to such a charming late-nineteenth-century building. No protection at all, all that stone perforated by windows. He shook his head, and his eyes fell on the black filing cabinets. He under-

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stood that severely irradiated skin turned black and fell off in strips right before the victim's eyes. Gershin put his head down on his desk and made himself think of his work for the day.

Gershin did not believe that his recent divorce had much to do with his fears, or that Ann's return would calm them, but he often thought about himself at his office, Nicole at pre-school, Ann in Chicago, with regret that they were so scattered and vulnerable. A person, he thought, was not born alone, and he or she should not die alone. There should be some embrace like the tight, slick, warm embrace of the birth canal to ease his or her passage. When he was feeling optimistic, he thought that attention to the news would warn him when an attack was at hand, and he could take Nicole out of school and keep her with him. When he was feeling very optimistic, Gershin imagined calling Ann and persuading her to come back, just for the end. It was possible that Ann had fallen in love again, but he thought not. She was too busy, too accomplished, and too old to find anyone quickly.

When he was feeling pessimistic, Gershin expected the explosion in his office even as he sat and watched. There came a hair-raising knock at the door, and Miss Taplow entered with letters she had typed. She said, "You have lunch with Mr. Jacks and then a two o'clock with Henry Sorel about the trust. This morning Mr. Colby would like to begin talking to you about the Mead wills."

"Thank you, Miss Taplow." He imagined her skin turning black and falling off in strips, the horror on her face as she realized what was happening. When she turned away, he closed his eyes. He had not imagined that before. He thought it was time for something new, something categorically different from the lectures and orders he had been giving himself week after week. He opened his bottom left drawer and took out his phone book.

Gershin turned to Psychiatrists and ran his finger down the list until he came to the name "Anne Belkin." He dialed, although he knew that the worst way to pick a psychiatrist was to find someone who sounded like she should be married to you. A receptionist answered the phone, and announced that Gershin had reached Town and Country Mental Health Associates. He asked to speak to Dr. Belkin.

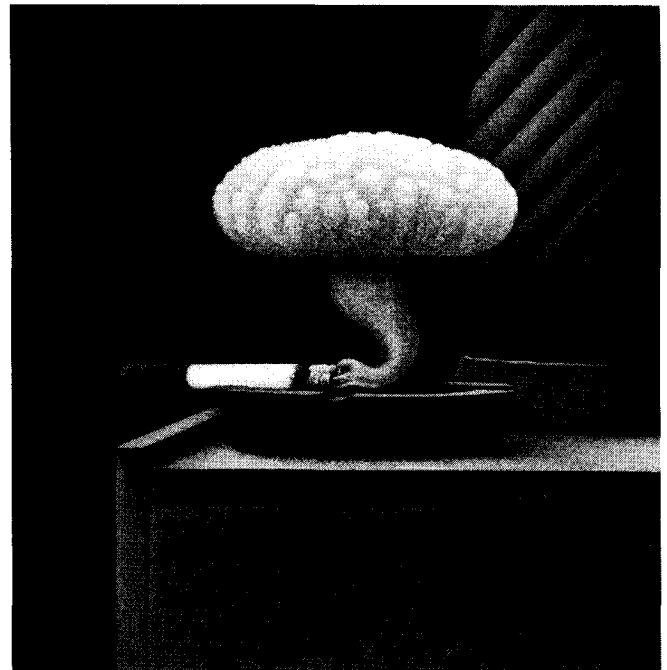
"Is this concerning an appointment, sir?"

"Yes and no. Before I make an appointment, I need to speak to the doctor."

"I'm afraid that would be impossible, sir. Would you give me your name and telephone number so that the doctor can return the call?"

"No, that'll be too late. I must speak to the doctor!" With some sense of shame, Gershin made himself sound as though he were about to commit suicide. The receptionist became carefully calm, saying that she would speak to the doctor. Gershin waited in mortification, feeling his job, his education, his house, and his fatherhood drain away.

"This is Doctor Halstead." The sound of the man's voice



shocked Gershin and made him sit up in his chair. He said in a calm—too calm—tone, "I'm afraid of nuclear war."

Doctor Halstead spoke reassuringly. "That's something we all fear, sir—" and Gershin took the phone from his ear and hung it up carefully, to appear as polite as possible. That the psychiatrist too was afraid—and he a white male of the most dominant sort—was not what Gershin wanted to talk about. The psychiatrist should have gasped and said, "You are a sick man; come see me immediately!" Gershin dialed Miss Taplow and asked her what was new. She laughed, not having heard anything. If the first strike came from Russian subs patrolling New York harbor, you didn't even have seventeen minutes.

DAVID JACKS WAS GERSHIN'S BEST FRIEND. FOR that reason, the first thing he said to Gershin when he reached the restaurant, late, was, "None of that crap about the coming holocaust, okay? And I'll tell you what Dorothy heard from Annie, but you have to swear not to run it into the ground."

Gershin nodded. David called over the waitress and ordered himself a Michelob and Gershin another Heineken. David had a company that restored old buildings. Gershin sometimes painted for him in his spare time. That David had been putting up with him lately, humoring him and being his loyal buddy, David made perfectly clear. Although David often pretended to be near the end of his rope, Gershin suspected that the length of his rope was actually infinite. David had brothers. He assumed that relationships were for life. However, since all his brothers were younger, he gave a lot of advice. "Now, look," he began. "First I'm going to tell you about the Paul House, and then we can talk about you."

"What about the Paul House?"

"Only that Dorothy persuaded the Historical Society to let her do the landscaping, so the whole restoration is going to be a Jacks family production. You should see the colors we've got for the trim, very classy burgundy—"

"What's Dorothy's idea?"

"Well, I'll tell you. She was doing some research and she found that all these species of trees had been imported within a ten-year period, right around the time when the house was built—"

"So what did Annie say to her?"

"Hey, Gersh, you've got to stop assuming that's the most important thing. Life goes on, and even improves, you know. It's been almost a year. She ought to be at least half-way down your list of priorities by now."

"So *you* say. Tell me."

For the first time, David looked doubtful.

"So tell me."

"Well, half of it is that she's going to New Zealand."

"New Zealand!"

"Isn't that something?" exclaimed David, taking Gersh's tone to mean amazement at the distance, when it was really appreciation of her audacity in seeking refuge.

It was impossible not to hope. Gershin hoped instantly, saw instantly Annie, Nicole, himself, hand in hand in that crystalline tropic blue always displayed in tourist ads. He said, "The other half is that she's going with some guy, right?"

David nodded. He drank most of his beer, then said, "I'm sure she hasn't known him long. I'm sure he's the guy she met this summer at that conference."

"Did she meet a guy this summer?"

The waitress brought two large barbecued-beef sandwiches and two plates of coleslaw. New Zealand would be beautiful, breathtaking. It was said that even in an all-out exchange, amounting to thousands of warheads on each side, less than 30 percent of the ozone layer of the Southern Hemisphere would be destroyed, leaving undamaged many of those food crops that would bake farther north in the sudden scorch of ultraviolet sunlight. You could survive with a good sun hat and a pair of reflecting gloves. David was scraping up the last bits of coleslaw with the edge of his fork. "What about Nicole?" said Gershin.

"I'm sure Annie will call her right before she goes and right after she gets back. And send her postcards and letters and stuff. Nicole won't even notice. The kid doesn't go there till Christmas, does she?"

"Annie's not moving there?"

"Moving there? No. She's going two weeks with this guy. He's going on business and she's going along for the ride. Did you think she was moving there?"

"I—"

"How could she move there? What about Nicole?"

"But you made a big deal of it! I thought she was packing up, evacuating for good. I thought she might take Nicole with her, actually."

"It is a big deal, Gersh! She's taking off with another guy. The *first* other guy."

"I suppose."

"Don't you care?"

David looked at him suspiciously, and Gershin smiled slightly. It was an idea. How did you go about looking for employment in New Zealand? Did they need tax lawyers? Was a tax lawyer too specific, too precisely geared to his own machinery of laws to be exportable? But he wasn't thirty-five yet. How about another line of work? The glow of hope helped him say, "What's this guy of Annie's do?"

"Engineer of some kind. Dorothy says he's older. Ten, twelve years."

"That does seem weird."

"No kids, either. Never been married."

They chewed over the few morsels of information David had about John Wesley—or was his name John Woods?—and while the light they shed on Annie's aspirations seemed peculiar and depressing, it was a pleasure to think of her in New Zealand, safe in a thick sweater, standing knee-deep in moist living grass, ten, twelve, fifteen thousand miles away.

Coming out of the restaurant, Gershin nearly stumbled into Bambi Jensen, whom he hadn't seen, to his relief, in about three months. Bambi Jensen was the sort of relic who always carried one or two joints, as a gesture of sociability, and had once called herself, in Gershin's hearing, "a soldier in the sexual revolution." Gershin had gathered from her manner over the past year that she wished him to like her. He could not imagine why. In his present state, he could not imagine "liking" anyone. "How *are* you?" he said, grudgingly.

"Busy. Do you really care?"

There was no answer to that. Gershin smiled. He could easily imagine Bambi blown away in a firestorm, her waist-length hair flaming up and her Birkenstock sandals spinning in the whirlwind above her head. "Got to get back to the office!" he exclaimed unnecessarily.

"Sure," she said, and in her single word was a mixture of friendliness, skepticism, interest, indifference, and experience that began by making him uncomfortable and ended by refreshing his hostility to such a degree that when he got back to work he was rehearsing perfect ways to tell her that people like her—shallow, anti-intellectual, thoughtless, but condescending—were what was wrong with their generation. Abrasive, without manners. Miss Taplow announced Henry Sorel.

GERSHIN ENVIED HENRY SOREL, BECAUSE HE WAS so old that he would probably die without being bombed. If he feared the devastation—and he never gave a sign of fearing anything—he probably feared only disruption of the minute provisions he had made for his heirs. Every dime of his large fortune was to go into a trust, which would pay, at the proper time, for what Sorel

thought each heir would need. You didn't need a house, for example, until you were twenty-eight, or until your legal wife was pregnant with your first child, and so no money would be paid out for residences until the heir in question reached twenty-eight or potential fatherhood. At twenty-one, there was money for a car. Upon marriage, there was money for another car. When the heirs of the heirs reached school age, there was money for good parochial schools, and there was money for educational travel, if the applicant fulfilled all the prerequisites that justified the word "educational." When the heirs of the heirs reached college

age, there was money for Notre Dame or Georgetown. The trust was like a large foundation, to which the heirs would apply as for grants. Gershin considered it peculiar at times and immoral at other times, but, because the firm would be the sole executor of the trust in perpetuity, he entertained Sorel's changes of mood and mind with care and courtesy. Besides, Sorel was a likable man. When he came to talk about the trust, he always stayed to talk about Russian music, because Gershin's name reminded him of Russia, which reminded him of music. With Emmett Colby, he talked about fishing in the British Isles.

When Miss Taplow showed him in, he was saying to her, "I've been thinking of the *Firebird* all morning. Surely you know it?" Miss Taplow smiled ambiguously. He turned to Gershin. "I heard Stravinsky conduct it. You know, Stravinsky always presented himself as a perfectionist, but he made numerous mistakes with his own score. London, it was. Sometime. Sublime, anyway, in spite of the mistakes. Let's call them improvisations? Even though the orchestra didn't know about them either!" He sat down, laughing heartily at his own joke. Gershin smiled. "Now, Attorney Gershin!" he went on. "What's the matter with you? You look down in the mouth. Now, I've thought of something. Take notes. What if one of them wants to go into business? Not my business, but something of his own, her own, something profitable. What if one of them shows some gumption? New businesses take money. And what if they show gumption and stupidity at the same time and want to buy a restaurant or a bookshop? How are we going to discriminate? The principle of the trust is that they all get the same chance, but going into business is different from college and cars. I don't want my money frittered away. This is a philosophical problem. Are you a philosophical man, Gershin?"

"Not by profession, sir, but perhaps by avocation." Could obsession with mutually assured destruction be considered philosophy?

"Good, then you think about it. Everything fair and equal, but everything nicely protected, too."

"The utopian socialist estate?"

"Good. I like that. I was a Communist, you know, back in the thirties, right after I first got rich. I used to take the streetcar and go third-class on the train, but standing in line made me want to strangle my neighbor. That's what socialism is, you know, standing in line. Now, what about this Shostakovich book? I think it's a fake, myself." Gershin sat back and listened to the dissertation, wondering about the experience of being brought low. If the attack were to come right now, Henry Sorel, who had had his way for forty years, or fifty, or eighty-five, would be brought low. Speaking of philosophers, some of them seemed to think that being brought low and finding truth amounted to the same thing, that the final, humbled, mortal, suffering thought was the only real one. Gershin, looking at Henry Sorel, doubted that. If he stood, like a Hiroshima victim, naked and holding his eyeball in his hand, couldn't



ACCOMMODATIONS

The house painter is not sentimental
and sets the wasps' nest on fire,
and the tribe of wasps is not proud
or dissuadable, and soon
a new nest hangs overhead.

We walk in and out of the door
under their home, a sponge
with oversized holes, quite safe,
keeping our downstairs distance
from their upstairs goings-on.

We're busy chasing a squirrel
which terrorizes our undersized
black and white cat, whose heart
pummels all parts of her body,
demanding an out until she falls
on the red terrace. I want to poison
the squirrel, but of course I don't,
and the cat recovers and looks with desire
at the aspens which have grown so tall—

up from the scarred old bark
near the ground, to the milky skin
with its irregular love-bites
above, where the birds keep climbing
nearer and nearer the sun,
our ancient, hovering nurse,
scatterbrained but intact
and close enough for comfort.

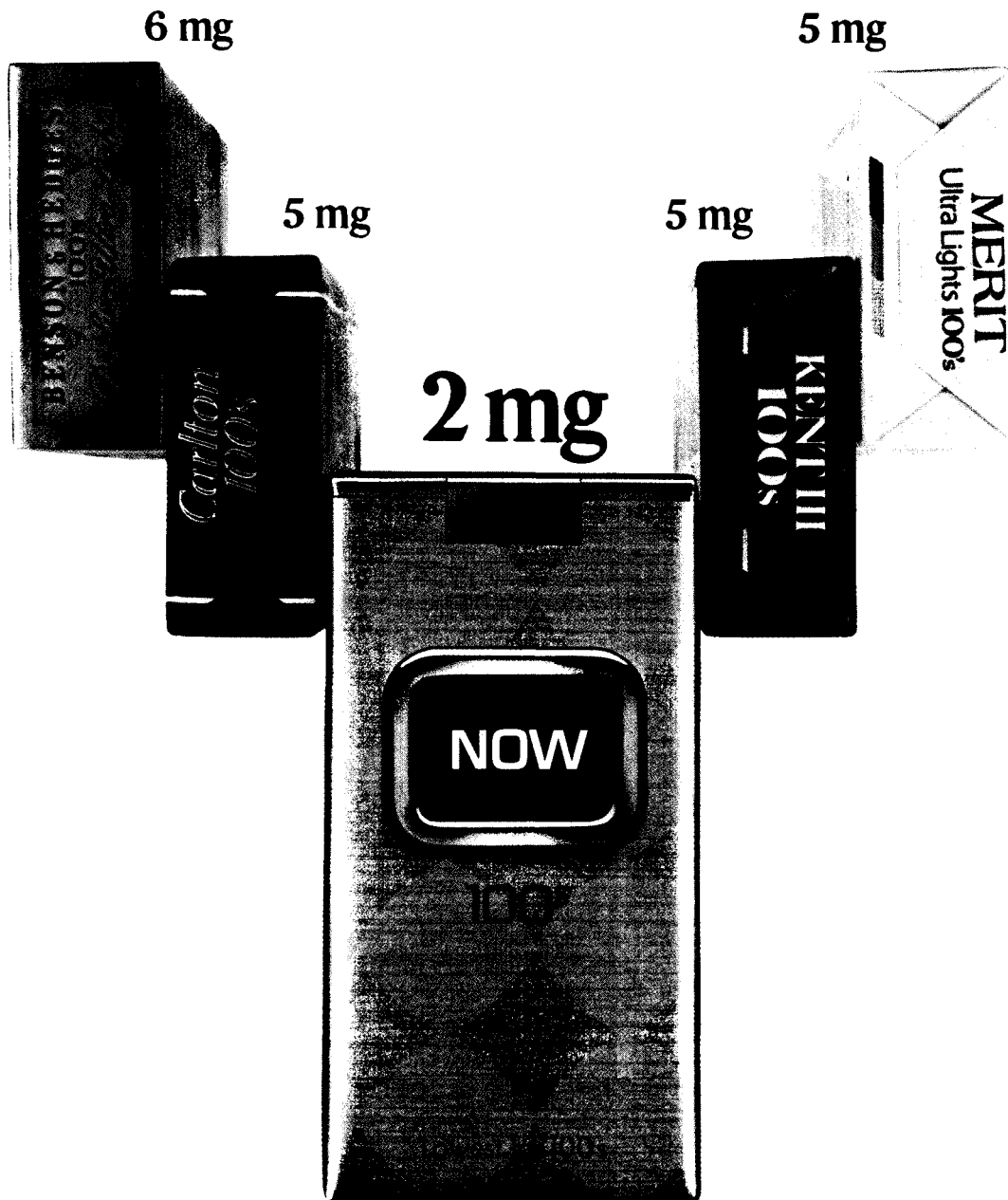
—Lisel Mueller

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Symphony orchestras in 9 countries listen to me.
I listen to E.F. Hutton.

you take just one other moment, the moment of his first big contract, say, or the time he recovered from Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and balance the two? Gershin nodded with apparent interest as both of Henry Sorel's eyeballs rolled wholesomely in their sockets (he was making a point with mock exasperation). Sorel had seen Shostakovich; his mother had heard Tchaikovsky conduct. Perhaps it was people like Henry Sorel, habitually unbridled in imagination and whim, who built and considered using bombs, who saw them as a tool and disbelieved the consequences. It was terribly hard to know.

AT THE SCHOOL, NICOLE AND TWO LITTLE BOYS were doing sponge paintings. Both of Nicole's sleeves were orange-spattered to the elbows, and she had entered one of those pre-school states of mind that Gershin found both entertaining and draining—she was excitable and full of jokes, wild and unusually persistent about getting attention and her own way. While he was putting on her sweater and finding everything she had made that day, she and another girl thrust out their tongues to the roots, rolled their eyes, and said “Ullaugh!” as raucously as they could. As soon as they got outside, though, she calmed down and began to tell him, in exact, adult, conversational tones, what she had done during the day. Gershin always felt like a good father when they were conversing; he contained his delight in the logic and intelligence that had sprung up so suddenly in her infant mind. They would be together all evening and all night. They would watch the news, listen to the radio, read the paper. Nothing would take them unawares.

The autumn had reached its brightest moment. Light rains two days earlier had greened the grass without dimming the radiance of the leaf canopy. The ribbon of sidewalk shone like white satin. The long, settled blocks of sparkling board houses seemed timeless—perhaps, Gershin thought, because his earliest memories were of houses like these. His mother had him by the hand, and they were walking to the store, as they had done since before he could remember, always to return to the permanence of their own clapboard house. Gershin looked down at Nicole, who was holding his hand and talking, then stopped, stooped down, and picked her up. She said, “Jody and Melissa and I didn’t lick tongues today.”

“You didn’t! Do you lick tongues other days?”

Nicole nodded.

“That’s disgusting!” He exaggerated so that she would laugh, which she did, and wondered what Ann would say, whether she would ignore or discourage tongue-licking. Would she be any more likely to know about this detail of child-raising than he was? He put Nicole down and resumed gazing at the houses they passed, estimating the number of their rooms from external protrusions, envying certain sun porches and oval leaded windows.

He could not remember any first fear, but he knew it

was early: after the gorilla that had chased him in his dreams and demolished the neighborhood, but before school. By eight his dread was full-grown; he remembered waking to a thunderclap in his cousins’ old apartment in Chicago and being certain it was a bomb. The cousins moved from there in the summer before fourth grade. And though the fear was permanent, changing as he grew only in its power, there was little to say about it. Almost the only reference anyone made came during war games in the neighborhood. If you were hit by a bullet or machine-gun fire, you could get up after a certain time and fight again, but if you were hit by an atomic bomb or a bazooka round you had to stay dead until the game was over.

They crossed the street and approached their own white board house, in which Gershin always saw a good deal of charm. Now, especially, with the grass neatly cut and the two tall maples in brilliant leaf, the black shutters and the black door seemed crisp and stylish against the white siding. Safe as houses. The apparent safety of houses, Gershin thought, was in their square lines. They stood with the confidence of solid objects. Nothing was more vulnerable than a house in this day and age.

Nicole settled herself before *The Electric Company*, and Gershin brought her a peanut-butter sandwich on whole wheat, cut into quarters, some cottage cheese, a bowl of applesauce, and a cup of milk. The child-care books recommended a serving every week of things like liver and green beans and baked custard, eaten and commented upon at the family dinner table, but Nicole liked this, which was fine with Gershin. He peeled himself an orange, into a napkin, and sat with a beer to watch the news as Nicole took her plate, cup, bowl, and spoon into the kitchen.

WHEN HE THOUGHT ABOUT IT AFTERWARD, IT DID not seem to have been the lead story. Certainly Nicole was back in the room by then, pestering him to roll out the Play-Doh with an old Alka-Seltzer bottle so that she could cut it with the cookie cutters. But what the lead story had been, whether it was domestic or foreign, important or routine, Gershin could not have said. The shock, like a blow to the head, banished forever what immediately preceded it. The general, with dark clipped hair revealing an oblong brainpan, stayed as familiar to Gershin as a brother. He had been testifying about nuclear readiness, the bored faces of senators ranged around him.

Some senator, his half-glasses slipping down his nose, lifted a sheaf of papers and asked a question. His aide could be glimpsed behind him, straightening the collar of her blouse in the tedium.

The general’s voice rose. He made no direct answer; rather, his answer was, on the face of it, a non sequitur. He said, “War is a virtual certainty,” and, as he said it, he was scared to death. “We know,” he went on, “that they are going to bomb us.”

Then he stopped, the senators stopped, the tape

stopped, and Dan Rather reappeared with news that the general was now at the White House, probably being retired. That, of course, didn't signify, because they would retire him for his political error, not for his knowledge of the truth. Gershin's gaze fixed on Nicole, and included, peripherally, his own knees and feet. He was so shocked that for a few minutes he couldn't unfix it. To have his worst private fears confirmed by a man who was supposed to know what he was saying was impossible, yet certain at some time or other. That rising of the voice, that marrow-deep panic struggling out, that was incontrovertible evidence. All their secret knowledge confirmed it, and all their training could not suppress it. Gershin unfixed his gaze by closing his eyes. They were doomed. His earlier fear, that day's fear, was nothing compared with this new fear. He felt exhausted. Where would he get the time and energy for this exponential swelling of alarm? The brain tumor was confirmed, except that unlike the average cancer patient, the victim of acute terminal nuclear exchange stood upright, carried his infirmity through the streets, and got no bed rest even in the ultimate moment.

Nicole climbed into his lap, saying, "I want a cookie, Daddy."

"You had a cookie already."

"Can I have some beer?"

"It's all gone."

"I want a cookie."

"How about something else? How about a banana?"

"Cookie!"

"No cookie until bed. We've got bananas and apples and crackers and cheese."

Nicole climbed down and went over to the barrel of Tinker Toys. "Let's build something," she said. "Let's build a pinwheel." But when he got down on the floor to help her, she put down the pieces she was holding and climbed into his lap again. "Can I go to bed, Daddy?"

"Right now? It's not even six o'clock."

Nicole nodded.

"Do you want to go to bed so you can have a cookie?"

Nicole nodded again.

"That's not a good reason. Let's have something else. I'll have something too."

"I want to sit in your lap."

"Good." He spoke with self-conscious affection. He never felt more responsible than when she was offering him her love. He put his arms around her in a ring. After a moment, she said, "I want to give you a kiss."

He offered his cheek. She licked it. Once again with self-conscious affection he said, "Don't lick me. I don't like it."

She licked him again.

"Nicole! I don't want you to lick me."

"I want to!"

"Well, I don't want you to, and I'm the one that's being licked. Just kiss me. I like that a lot."

She darted out a lick and he pushed her head away. "Stop it!"

"I want to lick your teeth."

"I think that's disgusting, and I don't want you to do it. Why don't you give me a kiss? You were going to give me a kiss."

While he was talking—gently and reasonably, he thought—she licked him on the chin. He exclaimed, "If you do that once more, I will spank you! I told you that I don't like it, and I mean it."

The look on her face was daring and merry. He put her down. "No!" she shouted. "No! I want to sit in your lap!"

"If you want to sit in my lap, then do what I say. We'll cooperate."

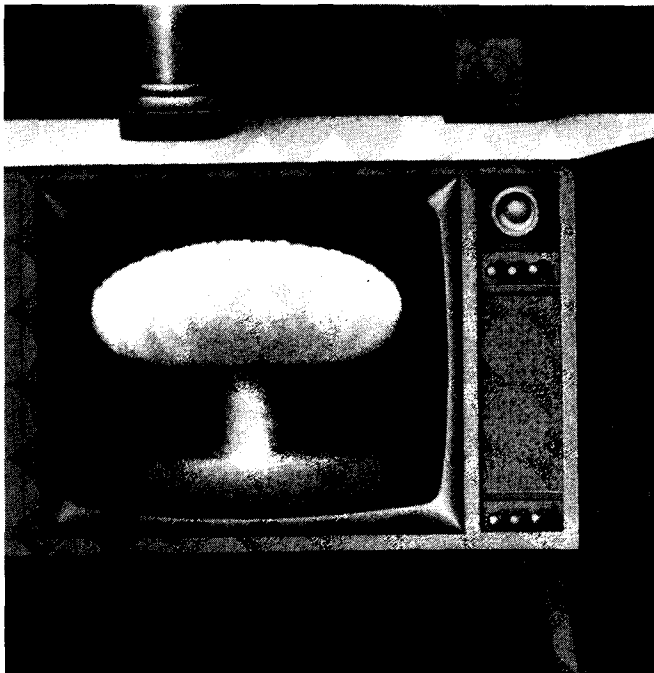
"Okay, Daddy." Her tone was calm and mature. He took her in his lap and settled his arms around her again. She turned her head and looked at him. He smiled. She reached up and licked him on the cheek.

In a flash she was across his knees and he was spanking her on the buttocks with more force than he meant. He was saying, "I said not to do that, now don't do it! I said I would spank you and I wasn't kidding." Five blows fell. She was screaming furiously. He put her down roughly but carefully, stood up, and went into the kitchen. Why was he spanking her when they were all going to die? But should she have her way in all things simply because she was doomed? He wondered, as he had before, if moments added up or if they simply followed one another.

The screaming in the other room settled into crying, and then calls of "I want Mommy! I want Mommy!" which made him smile. It was so obvious. After a while, there was only the noise of the TV. They were on sports now. Gershin took out another orange and another beer, peeled the orange and sectioned it, and put the pieces in a circle on a small plate. Nicole was sitting on the couch with her doll. When he sat down beside her and offered her a slice of orange, she said, "Yucky!" and waved him away. In a few moments, although he had tactfully set the plate close to her and had changed the channel to a re-run of *Three's Company*, her favorite show, she got up without looking at him, picked up her Big Bird doll, and went upstairs. She climbed the staircase with intense dignity, her eyes straight ahead, her steps heavy with effort. Ashamed of having so embarrassed her, Gershin didn't speak.

When he went up forty-five minutes later, she had put on her nightgown and gone to sleep. He tried to fasten the button behind her neck, but she squirmed and groaned. She had never rejected him so completely before. Gershin was afraid to wake her up.

A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER, HE USED THE INCIDENT as an excuse to call Ann in Chicago. The line was busy. He dialed three more times in quick succession, then called the operator and insisted that she check the line. Someone was talking. He nearly asked if the voices were male and female, but it was already all too easy to imagine Ann's throaty, always teasing tones, as



well as the tones of the other—not unlike his own, but deeper, more confident, the tones of a man comfortable with numbers and mechanical forces. He put the phone down, looked at it for a moment, then tried again. This time no one answered. At once he was bitterly jealous. He sat there for a long time, tears of anger and frustration rolling down his face.

He thought it must be getting late, but when he got up at last and went into the kitchen for his fourth, no, fifth beer of the night, it was only nine-thirty by the kitchen clock. He went back to the living room and sat again on the couch, thinking of Annie abroad in Chicago, the falling buildings, the shelters. He wanted to tell her that when the shelters in Dresden were opened after the fire-bombing, some of them were so hot they burst into flames. He got up and turned on all the lights in the house, hoping that would make him feel less lonely, but he only felt wasteful, so he turned them off again. At ten, he turned on the news. If there was nothing on the news, chances were he would get through the night. Among the car crashes and local murder trials, he heard no mention of the earlier story, about the general. That it had been expunged, Gershin thought, only showed that it was true. The doorbell rang. Gershin sat perfectly still, and it rang again. When he finally got up and looked through the peephole, he saw Bambi Jensen arranging herself to be bubbly and offhand. Gershin shuddered, but opened the door.

"Hi!" She managed it with extreme vivacity, as if promising untold entertainments were he just to let her in. She had told him once that she felt very comfortable with him—an inexplicable notion, since she was indifferent to children, hostile to the idea of marriage, and without a profession. "Kid must be in bed. Are you alone?"

"I was about to go to bed myself."

"So stay up for a while. What's up?"

"Not much. How about you?"

"Oh, plenty. None of it interesting. I've been doing money work for the women's art show, but all they really like is crafts, you know. Women weaving table runners for the dishes they made, full of the food they cooked for the old man to eat. It's okay, but I was hoping for some really strong painting and sculpture, and especially some film, and everyone says they want that, but their eyes don't light up until some housewife brings in the last six sweaters she knitted in Icelandic wool."

"Hmm."

She sat down on the couch, and Gershin turned off the TV, not without checking the smiles of the news announcers for evidence of surprise or anxiety. Sometimes they knew things ahead of time and kept them quiet. "I haven't seen much of you lately," he said.

"So what, huh?" Bambi tossed her head. "Everyone's busy. Want some?" She held out the inevitable joint. It was tempting, but Gershin declined. Bambi put it back in her pocket. "Look, I want you to go with me to the women's-show opening. There's going to be a dinner and everything. I haven't asked anyone else, even though it's only next week. I can get you a babysitter if you're stuck."

"I really—" The thought of it was bizarre, almost repulsive. Not only spending an evening alone with Bambi but, even more, breaking his routine, voluntarily abandoning his child, being away from TV, having to depend on sirens.

Bambi's face fell, as it had been prepared to do, and Gershin sighed. But Nicole, alone? The small museum that was hosting the women's show was all the way across town, fifteen minutes away even if the lights were with you. Bambi waited a moment for him to relent, taking Nicole's plastic Slinky in her hand and turning it over, then putting it down. Finally, she said, "Well, don't worry about it. I don't care that much. They would have liked you."

Gershin couldn't think of anything to say.

"I was going alone in the first place, anyway. I mean, it is a women's show, and so a lot of the women will be alone or with other women. It's absolutely insignificant. Absolutely."

Now, when it was too late, Gershin thought he might have offered some excuse, instead of making it so apparent that he simply didn't want to go with her. She said, "Don't worry about it." She dug herself more deeply into the couch. "You look like a wreck. What's the matter with you?"

"Do I?"

"Yeah, your skin is sort of gray and flushed at the same time."

"Terrific." Gershin felt insulted. On the other hand, his skin was still his skin, humming with capillaries and resilient to the touch. He said, "The state of the world's been on my mind, I guess."

"I go through that." She was very casual, and at once his recent agony seemed seedy and neurotic. "When I was lit-

tle, I used to run home every time I heard a siren, even if I could see the fire truck or the ambulance."

Gershin was reminded of his fear of airplanes and thunder. He kept silent.

"Shit. I was afraid of the nightly news. While it was on, I would sit in the kitchen with my fingers in my ears and hum to myself." Gershin wanted to say that things were different when you had a child, but he was afraid of how it would come out. She sighed. "For people our age, it's like a birth defect, you know. It wasn't your fault, and you can imagine life without it, but it'll be with you forever."

"I'm scared to death lately." He meant to impress her, but he sounded merely querulous. Even so, she was touched, in that woman's way, as if she were being confessed to.

A smile crossed Bambi's face, but her gaze flitted away from him, toward the television set. Fifteen years ago, Gershin thought, they would have come together in a kind of mooring sympathy, and probably have ended up going to bed. They would both have been prettier then, as well as more naive. Now they would stumble along until she finally gave up and went home, and then they would avoid each other a little until the details of the evening had blurred. He suddenly felt sorry for them. Even so, he scratched his head in annoyance and wished he were adept, as Annie was, at getting rid of guests. He could try a yawn, but Annie would get up and turn off lights.

"This is what else I think. . . ." But she did not say it. Gershin cleared his throat. Finally she went on, rather condescendingly, "Usually the only solution for insoluble problems is solidarity or prayer. Your average bourgeois individualist is always dumbfounded by everything." She glanced at him, and he knew, unmistakably, that she had soothed her disappointment by finding him unworthy of it. She stood up. Gershin followed her to the door. When he had closed it behind her, his only real dislike was for himself.

After a few minutes, though, everything was just the same. The general had spoken and the fuse of his fear had set off Gershin's own, like an explosion. That fear seemed to have a life of its own, the way it never flagged or ceased, the way it unrolled the various images of daytime suddenly blackened or nighttime suddenly white, the way it insinuated itself into every moment. What if the bomb came now, while he was looking out the window? The glass would shatter in his face. Could he make it upstairs to Nicole? Would there be an upstairs to make it to? Obviously, this small midwestern town couldn't be a target, but the Russians were well known to be less accurate than the Americans. After 8,000 miles in seventeen minutes, what's a few

degrees to the left or right? Gershin turned off the lights, hoped there would be electricity in the morning, hoped there would be a morning, and trudged up the stairs to bed.

Brushing his teeth, he tried to think appropriately of the day's failures, but when he looked into the mirror he thought only of Bambi, her lack of a bra, her tights, and her Birkenstock sandals. His teeth were stained, crooked, full of holes. His nose was pocked; his eyes were red-veined. This is what she would have seen in that last moment of silence. And the backs of his hands, even the backs of his fingers, were darker with hair than they had been. Still it was marvelous, his versatile fingers and the bones of his hand carrying on with the toothbrush over all the surfaces. One marveled at women or children, usually because they looked nice, but one hardly ever marveled at oneself anymore. The certainty of his uniqueness had ebbed away, and Gershin was not sorry to flow with the demographic torrent. Though he remembered his life as a drama of honesty and decision, he was satisfied, after all, to be normal.

He turned off the hall light and turned on the nightlight that would guide Nicole to the bathroom, then went into her room to cover her up. She had apparently awakened, still without calling out to him, had arranged her stuffed animals face down in the bed, and then had gone to sleep among them. Such independent activity shocked him. The roundness of her face and the buoyant flesh he loved looked unfamiliar; he doubted for a moment that she would awaken as his daughter. And *what if, right now*, with this south-facing window right here—would she wake up? What could waking up possibly mean at such a time? He put his hand over his eyes. Immediately he saw Bambi Jensen in a bubble of light, saw the shape of her arms and hips and neck exactly, although he hadn't realized he had noticed them. Her deep-set eyeballs with their papery lids, her thinning mouth. Nothing about her attracted him, and that gave her substance. The Bambi of his image slowly turned her head, and he felt as if he should say something, but a simple feeling of truth he could not express. He opened his eyes.

In a few moments, he pulled back the covers, pushed aside most of the animals, and climbed in beside Nicole. She still smelled like his baby, and he pressed his nose into her neck. Her uncombed hair lifted with his breath. She turned partway onto her back and flung out her arm. Past her head, out the window, a large, ashy moon radiated through the trees. What kind of prayer could be suitable for the deadly twentieth century? "Lord," said Gershin. He paused. "Please just let us die one at a time." □

Just a word about the price of The Glenlivet. Preposterous.

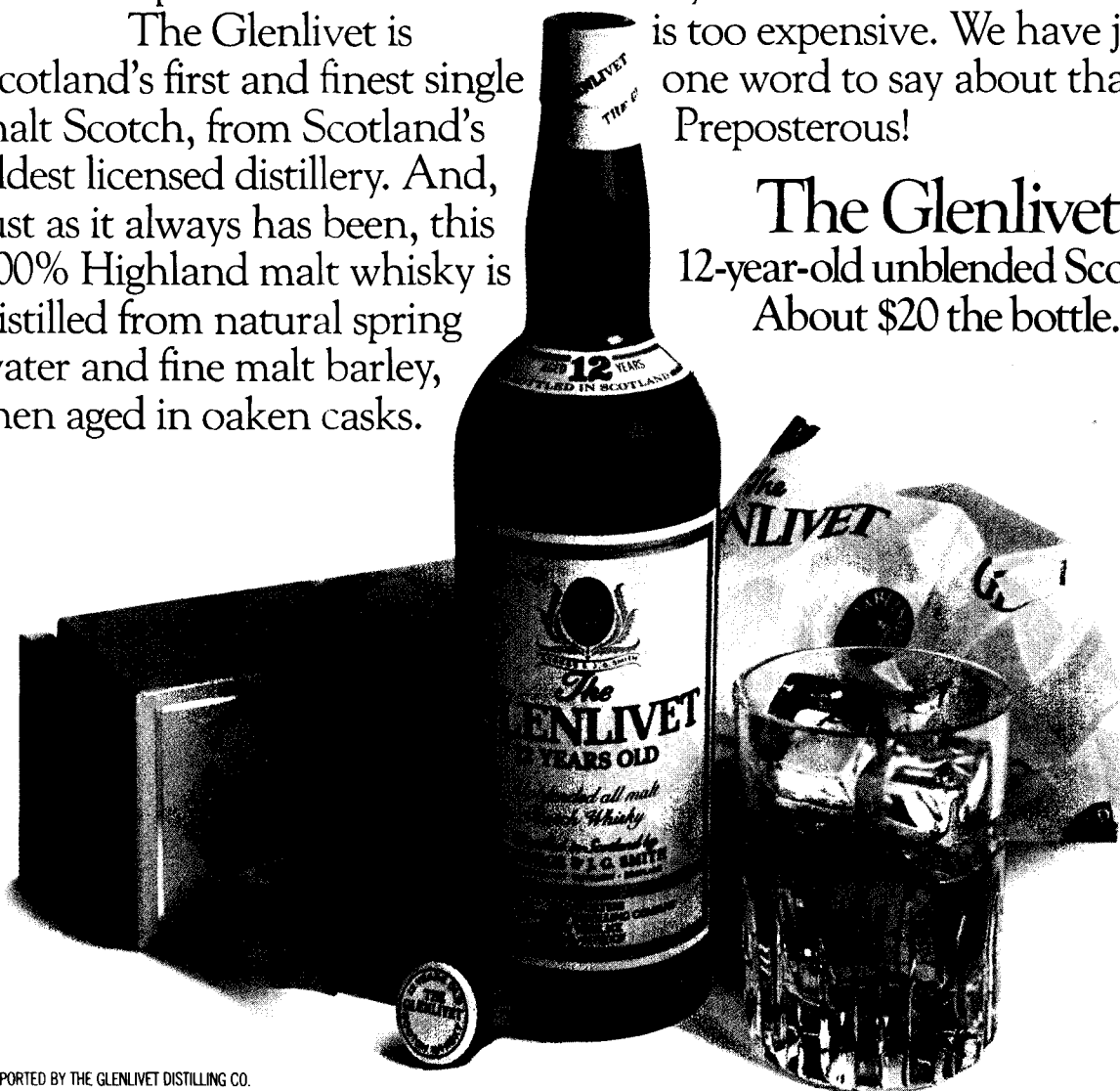
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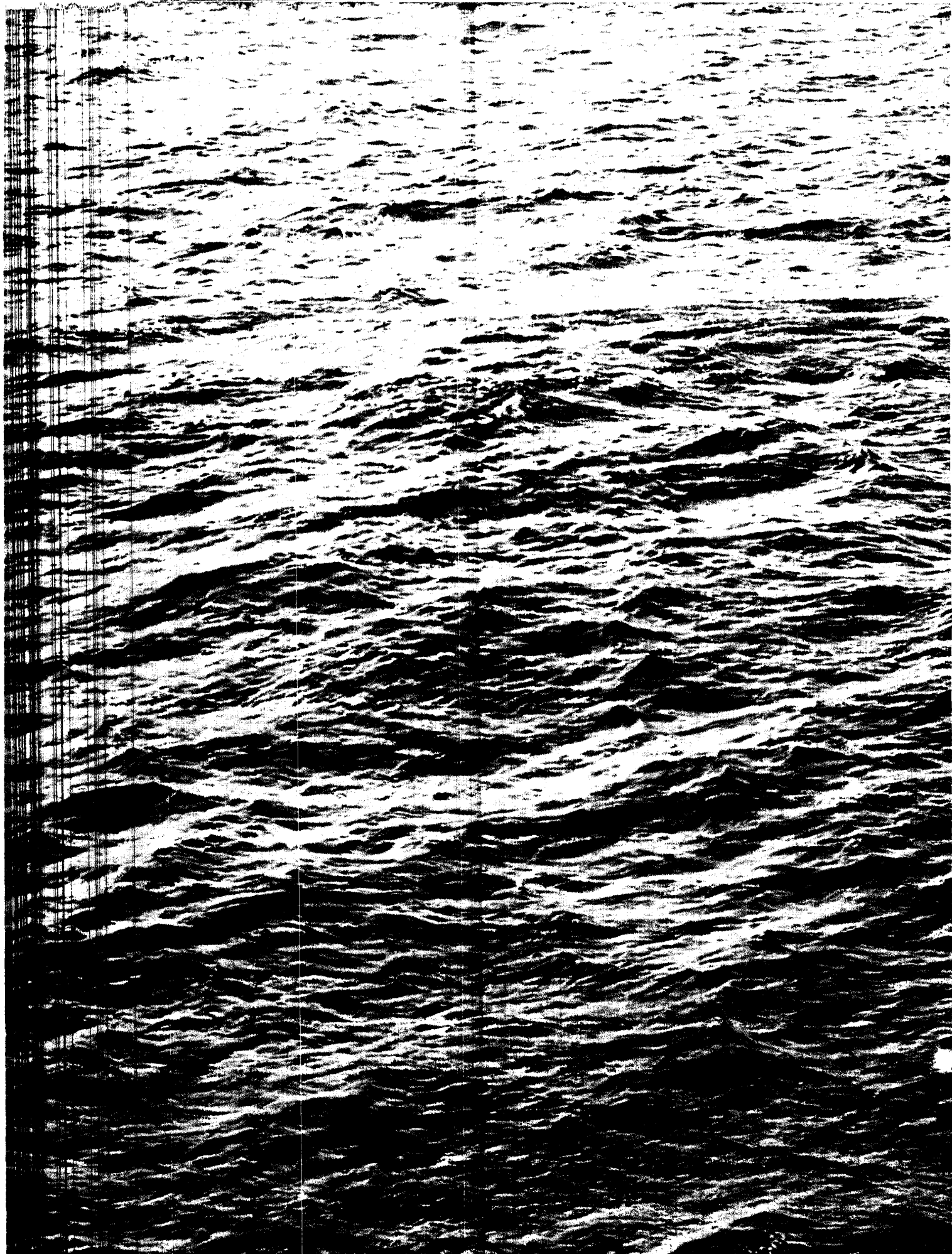
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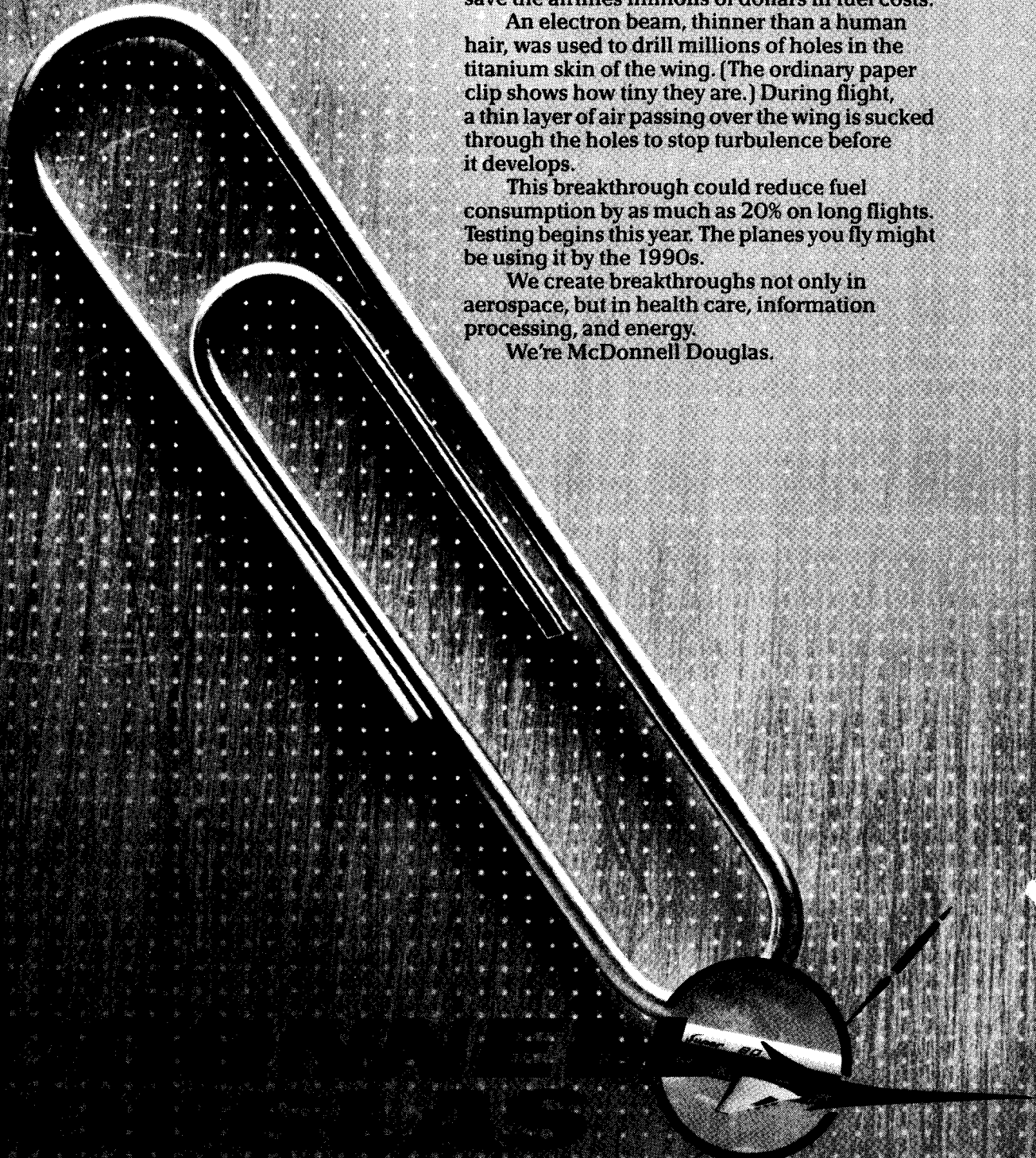
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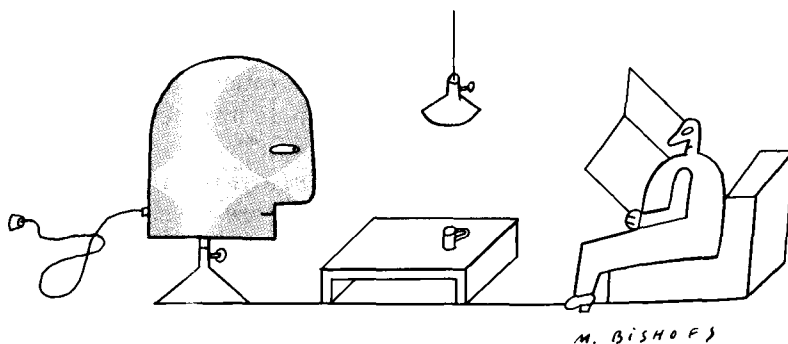
We're McDonnell Douglas.



The obituaries are premature

WHY THE NETWORKS WILL SURVIVE CABLE

BY ERIC MINK



TO HEAR SOME NETWORK-WATCHERS TALK, THE LOGOS for the television networks these days should not be a circle, an eye, and a peacock. A dinosaur would serve for all three. The networks, according to this metaphor, are failing to adapt to the sudden change made in their environment by the killing wind of new technology. In this Darwinian view, the networks' bigness and bureaucratic rigidity prevent them from responding to the mortal challenge; meanwhile, ingenious and aggressive predators, each with relatively modest territorial aspirations, dart about nibbling at their flanks.

Slowly, inexorably, the great beasts will lose more and more of their flesh and blood, until they can no longer survive. NBC, the weakest to begin with, will be the first to go. The others may linger a while, perhaps feebly trying to adjust, but they will only be postponing the inevitable. Their time has passed.

At first glance, there seems to be ample evidence to support this extinction theory. After denying that the new technologies threaten them, the broadcast networks watched their combined share of the nighttime television audience tumble from 90 percent just a few years ago to 78 percent during the first half of this year. CBS now publicly concedes that the networks' share will probably fall to around 70 percent by 1990 and stay there. Other industry estimates are as much as ten points lower.

Even more ominous than these numbers has been the enthusiasm shown by subscribers to cable television, the first of the new technologies to be widely available. They have been enchanted with the selections in their electronic supermarket: recent movies, minus network censorship and commercials, twenty-four hours a day; sports twenty-four hours a day; news twenty-four hours a day; channels devoted to health, women's issues, rock music, and weather; programs from other cities' independent television sta-

tions, such as fine old films and beloved shows from television's better days; channels devoted to the visual arts, classical music, dance, drama; and a channel of national public-affairs programs, including live coverage of U.S. House of Representatives sessions, House and Senate committee hearings, and speeches from the National Press Club, as well as video call-in shows on which we the people can interrogate legislators, newsmakers, and reporters. Democracy in action, in color.

And there are more new technologies, some on the horizon, some already here: video games, home computers, two-way television, teletext, STV (subscription television), LPTV (low-power—that is, neighborhood—television), and DBS (direct broadcast satellites).

To many observers of the industry it seems obvious that the networks cannot survive the onslaught. At the very least, they predict, because video liberation comes at a price the new media will steal the affluent audience, leaving the networks with the masses, who can't afford to take their eyes elsewhere and who aren't very appealing to advertisers anyway.

Thus the extinction theory. It overlooks only one thing: reality.

Thomas E. Wheeler, president of the National Cable Television Association, is the new technologies' most indefatigable cheerleader. "Not only will the broadcast media survive the new technologies, they will offer better programming because of the competition," Wheeler says. "This doesn't mean that they are guaranteed success. Some broadcasters, perhaps even a network, may encounter severe financial distress, because the competition for viewers will be brutal. The result may not be a continuation of the status quo. Instead of the three networks—known sometimes as Tweedledum, Tweedledee, and Tweedlydee—there could be four, five, maybe six or seven networks."

Wheeler goes on to describe a "viewer's nirvana, with

Eric Mink is the television critic for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

programming from cable, broadcast, DBS, STV, MDS [multipoint distribution systems], cassettes, and disks. From my perspective, that means the public—with greater choice of quality programming—will be better served. Today, there are forty-three video services, plus half-a-dozen audio and teletext services. Who would want to turn the clock back just because competition threatens the status quo?"

Wheeler's gracious concessions to the competition notwithstanding, the networks could not survive in the environment he describes. His state of perfect bliss for viewers would spell death for ABC, CBS, and NBC. A network's business is delivering mass audiences to advertisers. Even a dozen thriving non-network program sources would splinter audiences so extensively that networking would become impossible.

It should come as no surprise that the networks take a different view of their future. Perhaps the mildest defense comes from Herbert Granath, president of ABC Video Enterprises, Inc., a division that ABC set up to dabble in the new technologies.

"I'm not one who believes the networks are anachronisms," Granath says. "The [network] distribution system will remain the dominant mass-audience medium, mainly because none of the others will take its place." The communications environment will change, he concedes, but "the changes will be at a pace such that if the networks are reasonably alert, they'll be able to react to them and survive."

Gene Jankowski, president of the CBS/Broadcast Group, dismisses technology as irrelevant to the survival of the networks. "The networks will survive as long as they put on programs that people want to watch," regardless of the existence of other delivery systems, Jankowski asserts. To his way of thinking, the new technologies aren't all that new. "Television was an entirely new dimension in communications when it came out. Now I already have pictures coming into my house. What's the challenge? The challenge is the message contained in those pictures."

Therefore, he says, all delivery systems face the same problems. "The laws of economics and the laws of creativity don't change." Jankowski recalls what happened after the imposition of the prime-time access rule, which forbids the networks to offer programming between 7:30 and 8 P.M., Eastern Time. When the rule was instituted, the network affiliates in each television market suddenly had a half-hour each night to fill as they saw fit.

"When prime-time access came in, we saw very little fresh programming," Jankowski recalls. Economics played a part in that, because "it's more efficient to do what the industry is already doing than to try something different." And creativity, delimited by the realities of commercial television, also had a lot to do with it. "Now you're going to program thirty-five new, empty channels? Where are the ideas to fill all those channels creatively going to come from?"

Without significantly different ideas for programs, Jankowski argues, the alternative technologies will be in trouble. "The minute that programming takes on a similarity to network programming, they run the risk of viewers' perceiving no difference between them," he says. "And why should people pay money if they're not getting anything different?"

Grant Tinker, chairman of NBC, says he thinks the eventual demise of a network is unlikely. "This is still a big, big business," he says. "What I think we've seen is, everybody has overestimated the size and speed of this process. The erosion to the new technologies is less than we thought it was."

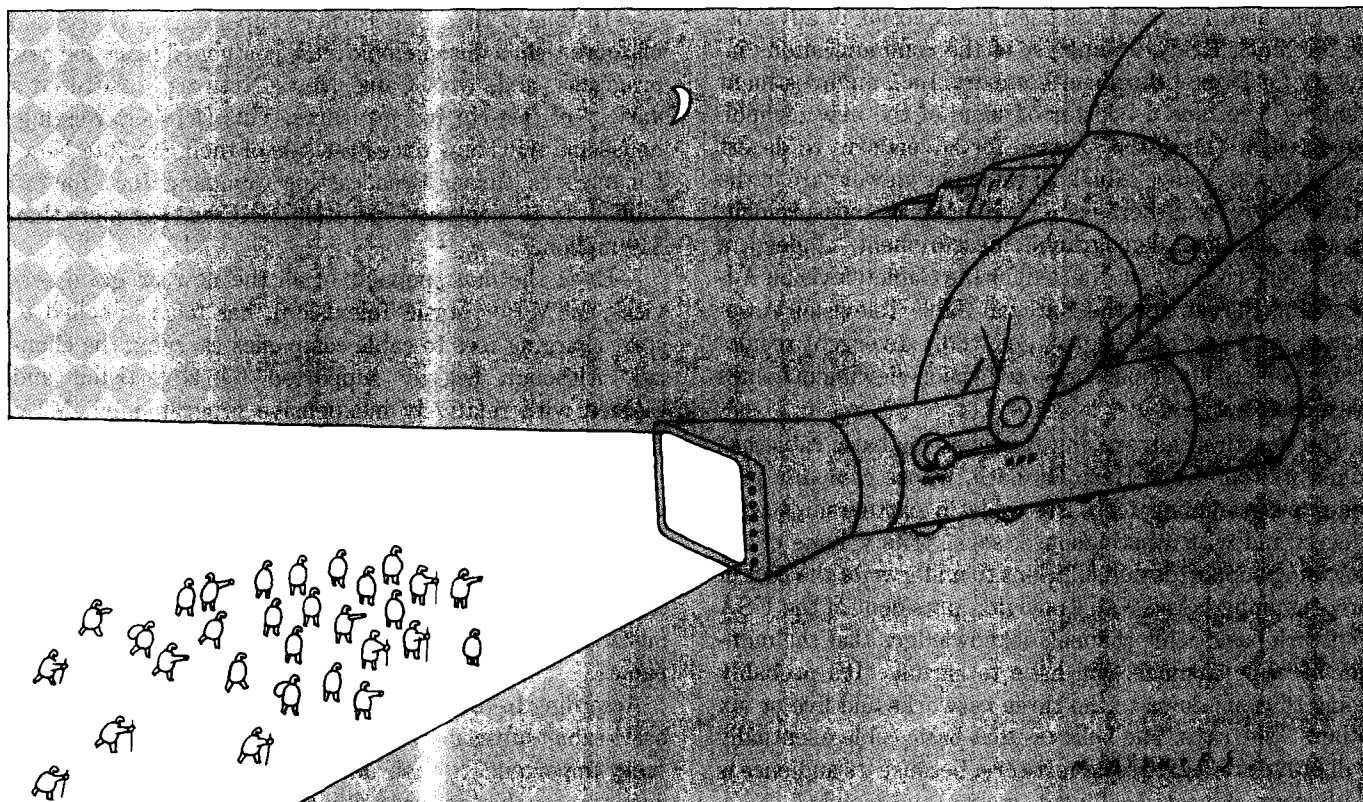
Tinker also says that the realities of program production and marketing are catching up with the new technologies. "I think those narrowcasting boutiques may fall by the wayside—and they don't have to be elite boutiques to do it," he says. Moreover, as pay-cable channels like HBO and Showtime produce more original programs, rather than simply running feature films, they seem to be emulating the networks. "If they get into our act, then maybe NBC and HBO are one and the same," Tinker says.

THE MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO THE NETWORKS is supposed to be cable television. Cable service is now available to about 60 percent of the American homes with television sets, and nearly two-thirds of those homes take it: according to A. C. Nielsen, about 39 percent of all American homes now subscribe to cable television. As more areas of the country are wired, that number will grow.

But scattered populations in rural areas and the sheer cost of constructing some systems may keep 20 percent of American homes from ever having access to a cable carrying video signals. If 60 percent of the people who eventually can get cable service decide to subscribe, then about 48 percent of all American homes will be wired. The true story of cable, however, lies beyond the numbers, and that's where the image of a viewer's nirvana begins to cloud.

There are two kinds of cable service: basic cable, which consists of channels supported by the sale of advertising time or by fees levied on the companies that operate local cable systems or by both; and pay cable, channels supported by extra monthly charges to basic-cable subscribers who take pay services. Basic-cable channels are the narrowcasting boutiques Tinker talks about. The pay channels—HBO, Showcase, Cinemax, the Movie Channel—are devoted mostly to feature films.

According to a recent study by the Benton & Bowles advertising agency, 78 percent of pay-cable subscribers called movies a "very important" reason for their having subscribed. Fifty percent of pay-cable subscribers said the fact that it was cheaper to watch films on pay cable than to go out to the movies was "very important." Forty-two percent of the subscribers said that being able to watch mov-



ies free from commercials was "very important" in their decision to subscribe.

Reliance on movies is a major problem for pay cable. The supply of movies is limited. The supply of movies that could be called anything but time-fillers is severely limited. Thus, the channels are forced to repeat the same movies over and over again each month—many of them features that viewers would never have paid to see in a theater. And nearly all the pay channels show the same movies at about the same time.

The result is that many pay-cable subscribers cancel their pay service because they don't feel they're getting their money's worth. HBO, arguably the most popular channel on cable television, has a cancellation rate of 3 percent a month, or 36 percent a year. The relatively new Playboy pay channel, which specializes in sexually oriented programming, admits to a desolating cancellation rate of 78 percent a year.

To distinguish themselves from one another, the pay channels are producing more and more original programs, movie-like creations made on budgets smaller than those of theatrical features but larger than those of run-of-the-mill, made-for-network pictures.

The channels that produce such movies are hoping that offering a lot of original programming will lessen their chances of being canceled when a subscriber decides to cut back to only one pay channel. The trouble with that strategy, as both Tinker and Jankowski point out, is that the more unknown pictures the pay channels produce, the more difficulty viewers will have distinguishing the chan-

nels from the networks, with their own made-for-TV movies, which come into the home free.

Further, with more and more viewers discovering that they can live quite comfortably with only one movie channel, the well of subscriber revenues, once thought to be a vastly deep, is turning out to be relatively shallow. To fill their coffers, the pay channels may have to turn to advertising. The Benton & Bowles study showed that viewers generally would tolerate limited advertising on movie channels, provided that subscription fees were cut substantially.

In the long run, what's a movie channel to do? Opt for more original production and run the risk of aping the networks? Stick with movies and risk driving subscribers away with bad quality and excessive repetition? Accept advertising and risk alienating subscribers who take the service to be rid of commercials? Cut subscription fees in half to gain viewer acceptance of the advertising? If these are the options, can more than one movie channel possibly survive?

The questions about advertising lead directly to the considerable and perhaps insurmountable problems of basic-cable services.

The advertising bonanza that would support Tom Wheeler's forty-three video services has so far failed to materialize. The magic number of U.S. homes penetrated by cable was supposed to be 30 percent. At that point the ad revenues were supposed to start rolling in. When 30 percent came and went, the magic number became 33 percent. As noted above, the number now stands at 39

percent, and there still has been no explosion of advertising. John S. Reidy, an analyst of the communications industry for Drexel Burnham Lambert, Inc., an investment banking firm, and a booster of some of the new technologies, says, "There's no reason for advertisers to desert the networks," since cable's ad rates per viewer "are in the stratosphere, and there is no good audience-measurement system, let alone demographic measurement." Indeed, a study done recently by Nielsen for the Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau and the National Cable Television Association, at a cost of \$500,000, got wildly divergent results from six methods of measuring television viewing in homes with cable service.

The dearth of advertising revenues for basic cable has taken its toll. Even Herb Granath, whose company provides programming for basic cable in partnerships with Hearst and with Westinghouse, says, "The volume of advertising support is not sufficient to underwrite the cost of programming." And Kay Koplovitz, president of the USA Network basic-cable channel, acknowledges that the number of basic channels will have to shrink. "It's probably going to come down to the three networks and five or six others," she says. She believes that basic cable eventually will prove attractive to advertisers, because its audience is "suburban, educated, affluent, young, and mobile."

"Eventually" proved too late for CBS's basic-cable cultural channel, which died after losing \$30 million in one year. And "eventually" is a long time for these services:

—The all-sports ESPN channel, even though it has more advertising revenues than any other specialized basic-cable service, has added two hours of business news daily in an effort to broaden its audience appeal. At the beginning of this year, ESPN increased by 150 percent the fees it charges cable operators, citing "reduced expectations for growth in advertising revenue." Those fees are to rise another 30 percent after the first of the year.

—The Weather Channel, a specialized channel whose strong suit was supposed to be quality service with low operating costs, is reported to have lost \$7 million in its first year of operation, and it continues to lose money at the rate of \$800,000 a month.

—The Daytime channel, owned by ABC and Hearst, is in the process of merging with the ailing Cable Health Network. Despite both channels' popularity with viewers, advertising support has been anemic.

—In October of 1982, forty people were cut from the ARTS and Daytime cable channels run by ABC and Hearst. More recently, ARTS has been merging with what was left of The Entertainment Channel, a pay-cable service that folded in March after only nine months of operation. It had cost its co-owners, RCA and Rockefeller Center, a sum in the neighborhood of \$34 million. Thanks to the merger, ARTS will acquire first U.S. cable rights to BBC programs. This, in turn, gives ARTS an inexpensive way to extend its hours of operation, but it does not provide additional advertising.

—In June of 1982, Ted Turner's superstation WTBS laid off more than a dozen employees, postponed plans for new programs, and, with Cable News Network, instituted a variety of cost-cutting measures. This October, Westinghouse and ABC announced the sale of their Satellite News Channels to Turner Broadcasting Company, Inc., for \$25 million. In 16 months of operation, SNC had lost more than \$40 million.

—Even the most popular of all the new program services, MTV (for Music Television), has felt compelled to start charging fees to cable companies carrying the channel. Although heavily supported by advertising and blessed with relatively inexpensive programming, MTV found ad revenues insufficient to run the service.

Thus the basic problem of basic cable. Lack of advertising support is forcing basic-cable channels to reduce the amount and the quality of the product they provide. That cannot help but affect the cable customers, whose loyalty to the technology has already been strained by the mistreatment they have received from local cable companies.

According to the Benton & Bowles report, 70 percent of basic-cable subscribers cited the number of channels as "very important" to their decision to buy the service. Reduce the number of channels and customers are bound to perceive, correctly, that they are getting less for their money. Some will cancel their service, which will leave fewer bodies to offer to already unenthusiastic advertisers, which will mean less ad support, which will lead to fewer channels, which will mean fewer subscribers and less ad support . . .

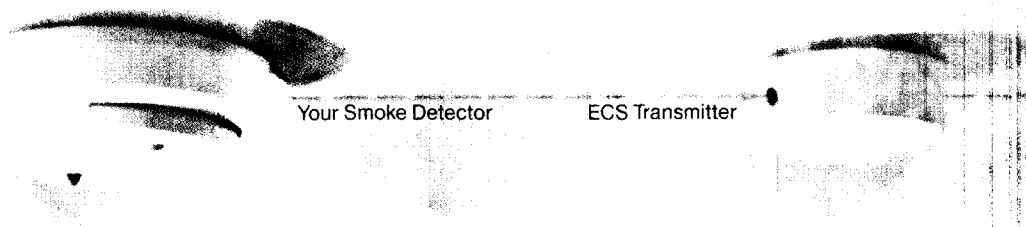
Finally, consider what it would do to cable if the public-broadcasting system accepted even a limited amount of advertising. An experiment conducted at nine public stations last year found little viewer resistance to tasteful commercials that didn't interrupt programs. As the public system is squeezed tighter by shrinking government subsidies, revenues from advertising could lessen, although not eliminate, the financial pressure it feels.

In the aggregate, the public-television audience is relatively affluent and educated, and public-television signals reach not 39 nor 48 nor 60 percent but 100 percent of American homes with television sets. Given a product or service compatible with the public-television audience, an advertising executive would be unlikely to choose cable over public television.

If cable television is the networks' most formidable competitor, they are not going to be extinct any time soon.

THERE REMAIN THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE alphabet technologies, DBS, STV, MDS, as well as by home video cassettes and disks. Laurence E. Steadman, president of Steadman/Coles, Inc., a Boston management-consulting firm, characterizes much of the talk about these technologies as "fantasy market specula-

... your smoke detector alone can't protect you. It's useless the moment you leave home.



**AT&T introduces the Emergency Call System (ECS).
It automatically phones for help whether you're there or not.**

What if your smoke detector went off and nobody was around to hear it? You could lose everything. The answer is the AT&T Emergency Call System (ECS Smoke/Fire alert).

When your smoke detector goes off, the ECS transmitter signals the ECS console, setting off a voice alarm: "Fire! Fire! Fire!" If the voice isn't cancelled within 30 seconds, the console automatically phones the first of two telephone numbers chosen by you,* reports the fire, gives your address and repeats it.

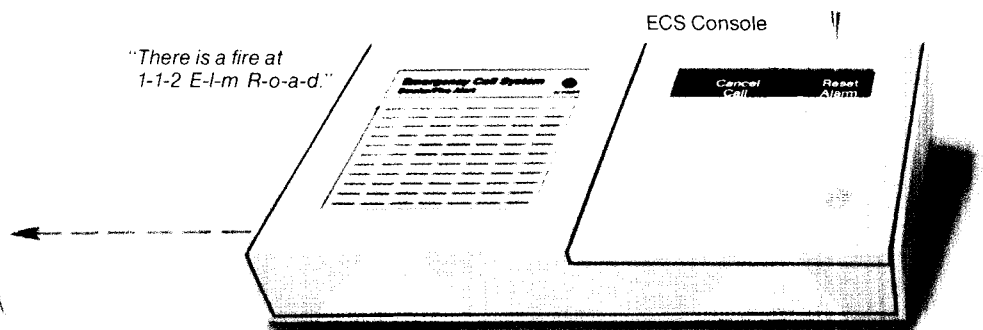
The ECS proved to be so effective that Fireman's Fund Insurance Companies, one of the country's largest insurance carriers, endorsed it.

For complete fire protection and peace of mind, invest in the ECS. If you need it only once, it's worth it.

See ECS at your AT&T Phone Center, now at thousands of leading retail stores. **We set the standards.**



"There is a fire at
1-1-2 E-I-m R-o-a-d."



*Consult your fire department on local laws governing calls made by automatic dialing devices to emergency numbers. Product may not be available for sale in all locations.

tion." In a recent article in *Broadcasting* magazine, he wrote, "Something has to give. . . . You can't throw broadcast TV, DBS, low-power TV, satellite master antenna TV, multichannel interactive cable, teletext, videotext, videodisks, etc., into the same pot and have everything come out a big winner."

In an interview last July, Steadman decried the paucity of what he called "strategic thinking"—disciplined, rational analyses of new media that investigate how the existing media came into being, on what principles they have based their success, and just how likely it is that those principles will cease to be valid. "Without strategic thinking, people are making some very expensive mistakes," he said.

"When television was invented, it was such a revolution in home entertainment that you'd watch anything," he said. "We lived in Nebraska, halfway between Omaha and Kansas City, and we would watch snow. You could barely hear anything and couldn't make out a picture. But we watched, because it was such a wonderful breakthrough."

Today, that naive desire to consume ever-increasing amounts of whatever is on the tube is gone. In his article, Steadman calls the failure to accept this point the "media consumption fallacy"—the assumption that "the greater the supply of new media fare, the greater the per capita consumption. The more-is-better reasoning sweeps away a lot of vexing problems about consumer time budgets."

Other prevalent misleading ideas, according to Steadman, include the "willingness-to-pay fallacy," the notion that there is no limit to the percentage of his income that a person will spend on media; the "indiscriminate consumer fallacy," the assumption that media consumers will pay for just about anything, regardless of its quality; and the self-explanatory "advertiser bailout fallacy."

"The people making money in the new media fields are the consulting firms and the conference organizers," Steadman said. "A whole support business has arisen to feed on the uncertainty and ignorance in the media industry." And that business has its own problems. "If you fall in love with the technology and start to want something to happen, then you can lose your perspective. People are projecting things that are just impossible to conceive."

The networks should have learned something from the false alarm over their extinction. They had the chance to eavesdrop at their own funeral, and if they were listening, they heard more cheering than mourning.

In some circles, people are ashamed to admit they watch

television. Others say they watch but they attach strict (and dubious) qualifiers: "I only watch PBS," or "I only watch cable," or "I only watch news and sports," or "I only watch *Hill Street Blues*." And even those who watch a lot of television often maintain that the shows *they* watch—no matter what the shows are—are far better than television in general.

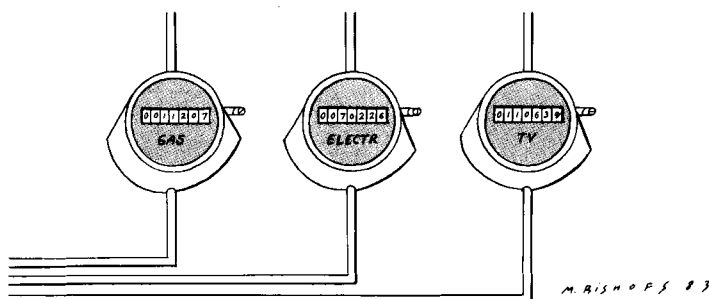
"A typical letter you get is in favor of a particular show that you have canceled," David Poltrack, research vice president of the CBS Broadcast Group, says. "The letter says, 'There's so much garbage on television. This was one of the good shows. Why did you cancel it?'"

Though they have always existed to some degree, negative attitudes toward entertainment television are sufficiently widespread, Poltrack says, that careful researchers into the public's viewing habits have had to construct their surveys to avoid eliciting "socially desirable responses." These days, he admits, the socially desirable responses about television entertainment programming are that the shows are terrible and that watching TV is bad for you and for society. This is so even though what people *say* about television often contradicts what they do in the privacy of their homes.

Most recently, viewers' negative attitudes toward entertainment television drew national attention with a study sponsored by the National Association of Broadcasters and developed by McHugh and Hoffman, Inc., a Fairfax, Virginia communications consulting firm. Presented at the NAB's annual convention in Las Vegas last April, the study sent the broadcasters into a dither with two of its findings—that growing numbers of viewers are dissatisfied with current programming and that they have come to regard watching television as a bad way to spend their time.

Poltrack admits that the NAB study and others have indicated "a negative trend in those attitudes." But at the same time that people condemn entertainment television in general, they say they enjoy the shows they watch more than ever. Poltrack says that the negative attitudes toward television don't reveal viewers' true beliefs; rather, they are just a socially desirable response.

Despite the image problems of entertainment television, people will keep watching the networks because they have no economically sensible alternative. The networks will survive, whether they are loved or despised, because the competition offers too little to too few for too much. □



"Ernani." Telecast from The Met. The most costly thing he ever stole was a heart.



**Watch Leona Mitchell, Luciano Pavarotti, Sherrill Milnes
and Ruggero Raimondi in the TV premiere of the new
Metropolitan Opera production of Verdi's "Ernani." James Levine
conducts. Wednesday, December 21, at 8PM (EST) on PBS.**

With English subtitles. Simulcast on Stereo FM in many cities.



Disguised as a bandit,
Ernani stole Elvira's heart away.
Although a king and a noble-
man vied for her hand, she
pledged love to Ernani until the
end of time. He did the same, not
knowing the end was near. Their wedding was
an expensive affair—it cost Ernani his life.



Tune in December 21st and you, too, will sing
the praises of Verdi's "Ernani." You'll have the best seat
in the house—right in your home.

For more opera listening during this centennial
season, tune in Saturday afternoons to Texaco's radio
broadcasts direct from The Metropolitan
Opera. Texaco. Your ticket to The Met for
over forty years.

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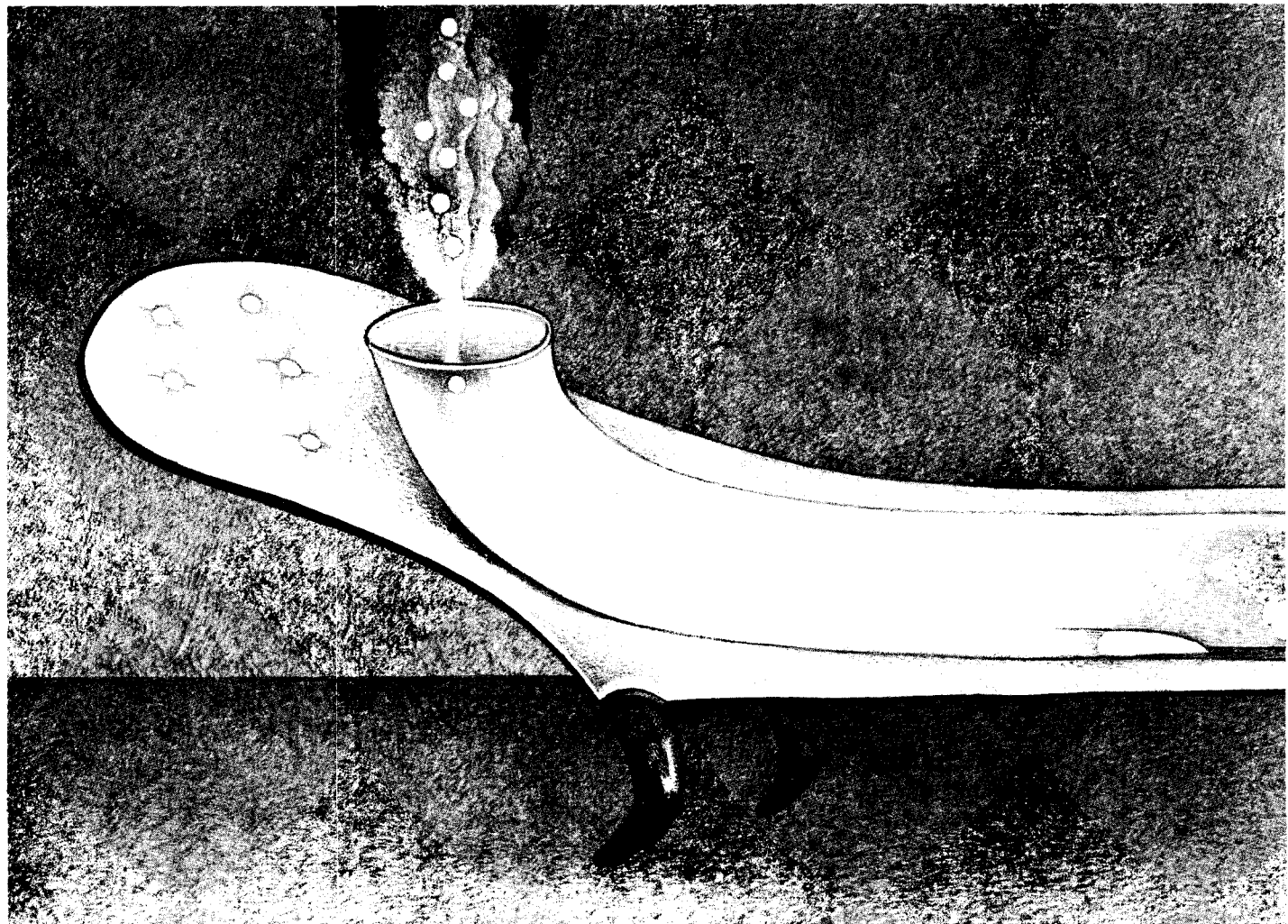
Researchers are coming closer to understanding the mechanisms of depression, manic depression, and schizophrenia

BIOLOGY AND MENTAL ILLNESS

BY JOSEPH ALPER

THE IDEA THAT SEVERE DEPRESSION, MANIC DEPRESSION, and schizophrenia can be understood in terms of biology is not new. Sigmund Freud, Emil Kraepelin, and a few other prominent European psychiatrists, frustrated by their inability to cure many of their patients, were among the first to propose that some mental illnesses would prove to have "organic roots." Only over the past decade, however, has it become possible for scientists to glimpse the physical abnormalities that manifest themselves as mental illness. Biological psychiatry—the study of the relationship between behavior and brain function—did not even come

into being until the 1950s, with the discovery of drugs that could alleviate many of the symptoms associated with mental illness. Today, drug therapy is the cornerstone of clinical practice. Psychoanalysis, in which a patient and a psychiatrist contract to spend hundreds of hours over a period of years resolving the patient's personal conflicts, has virtually no place in the treatment of serious disorders. And although psychotherapy—a short-term and less formal offshoot of analysis—does relieve certain forms of depression, it is used mainly as an adjunct of drugs to help patients cope with their illness.



All drugs work by causing some biochemical change, but the use of drugs to treat mental illnesses has preceded an understanding of what changes are provoked, and which of them are pivotal. It is chiefly as scientists have labored to figure out what drugs do in the brain that they have learned about the biochemical mechanisms of mental illnesses. From these experiments theories have arisen, which have led to more experiments and still more theories.

The best-understood mental illnesses at present are depression and manic depression, which psychiatrists define as "affective disorders," characterized by prolonged, substantial disturbances of mood. People suffering from depression alone ("unipolar disorder") are locked into irrationally persistent sadness, while those with manic depression ("bipolar disorder") cycle between depression and extreme elation. Mania without depression is extremely rare.

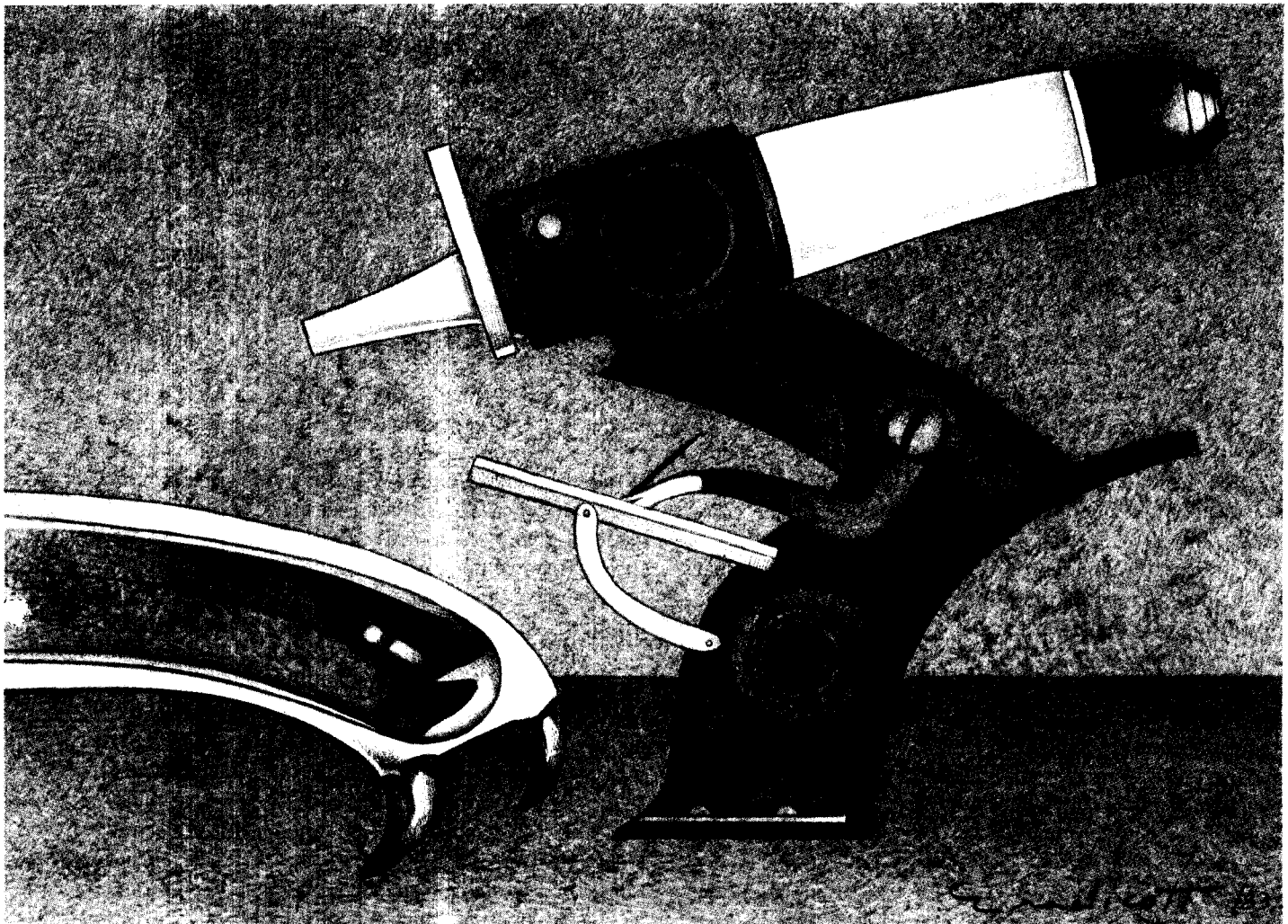
One line of the investigation of affective disorders scrutinizes the role that certain chemicals in the brain, called "neurotransmitters," play in controlling behavior. Neurotransmitters are small molecules that serve as the means of communication between neurons. Neurons do not actually touch one another but are separated by gaps, called

"synapses." In order for a chemical impulse to travel from one neuron to another, it must be conveyed across the synapse, and it is neurotransmitters that serve as the vehicles.

Of the more than twenty known neurotransmitters, three—norepinephrine, serotonin, and dopamine—belonging to the chemical family called "amines" have been implicated in the etiology of affective disorders. The amine theory of depression and mania holds that a shortage of these neurotransmitters is associated with depression and a surplus with mania.

Early evidence for the theory was obtained in the 1960s, when the brains of animals that had been given either a drug that produces depressive symptoms in human beings or a drug that alleviates them were examined. The drugs that cause depression were found to lower the level of amines in the brain, whereas the drugs that relieve depression raised it. These experiments have since been repeated using nerve cells grown in petri dishes, where the reactions could be observed more easily. The results were the same.

The one drug that does not function according to the rule is lithium. How it works is still largely a mystery, but what



is known both supports the amine theory and illustrates some of its shortcomings. Experiments with animals have shown that lithium inhibits the release of neurotransmitters. Thus, according to the theory, lithium should correct manic symptoms—and it does. But, by the same token, lithium should make depressive symptoms worse. In practice, however, the drug corrects that part of the bipolar cycle too.

For years, a major limitation of the work on neurotransmitters was that, at best, one can only infer what happens inside the brain of a living person from the autopsied brain of an animal or a human being. The development of a computerized imaging technique called “positron-emission transverse tomography,” or PETT, has made an enormous difference. PETT uses probes—radioactively labeled molecules—to follow biochemical events as they happen in the brain. The x-ray process produces a negative picture of internal structures; PETT provides a movie of the biochemical activities of such structures.

One of the first experiments to take advantage of PETT measured the brain's metabolism of glucose. Marked differences were found between the metabolisms of depressed or manic-depressive subjects and those of normal subjects, but no one knows what the differences mean, or why they exist. Better probes are needed to expose the brain's activities in finer detail. In May, Henry N. Wagner, a specialist in nuclear medicine, and others at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, in Baltimore, made a start. They developed a probe that would bind to those regions of the brain in which dopamine is found, and used PETT to register the sites.

William Potter, a pharmacologist at the National Institute of Mental Health, in Bethesda, Maryland, believes that the probe will yield valuable information about dopamine's role in affective disorders. But, he says, rather than look for simple surpluses or shortages of a single neurotransmitter, such as dopamine, researchers ought to examine the relationships among neurotransmitters, because changes in one affect the others. He believes that the neurotransmitter systems may not be regulated properly in mental illness—an idea he calls the “destabilized-systems theory.” According to Potter, “The key may be norepinephrine, because the neurons that make it originate in the midbrain region, which plays a crucial role in a number of systems that are altered in depression. In addition, all the drugs that work with the affective disorders, no matter which system they alter initially, eventually have an effect on norepinephrine. But regardless, somehow these interacting systems become destabilized, in a manner much more complicated than simply an excess or deficit of all the transmitters. I think it's much more subtle than that, and, in fact, I believe the bottom line is that the abnormalities that produce manic and depressed behavior

are really just modest shifts in the normal responses of these interconnected systems.”

If Potter is correct, the primary cause of these shifts—the biochemical abnormality that sets off the changes whose eventual manifestation is either depression or mania—will be difficult to pinpoint. Many believe that it lies in some small irregularity in the membranes of nerve cells. Lithium is known to induce a host of changes in the biological properties of nerve-cell membranes. When brain tissue obtained at autopsies of people who had affective disorders is tested, several large molecules associated with membranes show slightly abnormal biochemical properties.

If the membranes are ultimately at fault, a permanent cure for the affective disorders may be impossible. Membranes are complex structures assembled from hundreds of different molecules. They are crucial to the integrity and proper functioning of neurons, and their exact composition is constantly monitored by repair systems inside the neurons. Presumably, these systems are in turn controlled by the cell's genes. Thus, unless the genes can be replaced—a feat that some believe is promised by recombinant-DNA technology—any attempt to correct mistakes in the membrane would be undone instantly by the repair system. Potter is pessimistic. He says, “The best we could ever hope to do [using drugs] is to compensate for a membrane defect, not correct it.”

AFFECTIVE DISORDERS MAY ALSO BE LINKED TO derangements of internal circadian rhythms. Changes occur routinely in the body throughout the day. One's temperature, for example, reaches a peak early in the evening and a low early in the morning. The level of the hormone cortisol is lowest after midnight and starts to rise again at around 4 A.M., whereas the level of the hormone melatonin rises during the night and falls at dawn. Short-term memory deteriorates as the day proceeds, but long-term memory improves. Such cycles are genetically programmed. They are driven by the hypothalamus, a gland that lies next to and is stimulated by the midbrain (where some think that many of the malfunctions associated with affective disorders occur) and that controls the secretion of most hormones. Pacemaker cells in the hypothalamus receive information from the outside world through a tiny nerve fiber connected to the retina.

Experiments with normal volunteers have shown that human circadian rhythms, if allowed to establish themselves in the absence of any temporal cues, actually cycle at close to twenty-five hours. These experiments have also shown that at least two rhythm cycles regulate human activity—one corresponding to sleep and wakefulness and the other to variations in body temperature. Each is controlled by its own pacemaker system. Under normal conditions, the systems interact, but when a person is deprived of a sense of time, they can separate. Some mechanism

involving the pacemaker systems and the nerve connection between the eye and the brain must exist, therefore, to bring the systems into synchrony with each other and with nature's twenty-four-hour periodicity. Experiments conducted by Thomas Wehr, Frederick Goodwin, and others at the NIMH, beginning in 1978, suggest that this mechanism is defective in people with depressed or manic symptoms. Their circadian rhythms deviate greatly from the normal twenty-four-hour routine, and the pacemaker systems are disengaged even in the presence of appropriate temporal cues.

In Wehr and Goodwin's first experiment, when chronically depressed patients were deprived of sleep, their depressions lifted in the middle of the night, in some cases for the first time in years. Unfortunately, this effect lasted only until the patients were allowed to fall asleep. By observing the sleep cycles and temperature variations before, during, and after sleep deprivation, Wehr showed that the two systems were brought back into phase sometime between 1 and 5 A.M.—at the same time that mood improved. Follow-up experiments showed that patients who respond to antidepressants (a process that usually takes days or weeks) will do so almost immediately after they are deprived of sleep for one night.

In Wehr and Goodwin's second experiment, the sleep cycles of patients with either mania or depression were shifted back into synchrony with the temperature cycles. This adjustment produced remissions lasting between two weeks and several months, and was also found to hasten the effects of antidepressants or lithium.

During the course of these studies, Wehr and Goodwin discerned in a group of patients a new depressive syndrome—one that starts in the late fall and lifts, with a slight manic phase, in early spring. The circadian pacemakers of these patients seemed to be abnormally sensitive to light-dark transitions—specifically to seasonal changes in the hours of dawn and dusk. Remarkably, when a few of these patients were subjected to extra periods of intense light before dawn and after dusk, their depression lifted. Clinical studies are under way to determine whether this tactic can work as a treatment.

Eventually, researchers must explain how circadian rhythms and neurotransmitters fit together in depression and manic depression. Such a synthesis could take psychiatry a long way toward a comprehensive explanation of the biological basis of these disorders. Both Goodwin and Potter believe that an abnormal biological response to stress

will prove to be a key part of that explanation. For one thing, circadian rhythms are known to be temporarily altered by high-stress situations; temporary insomnia is one manifestation of this. For another, stress often decreases the time between relapses in depression and increases the frequency of manic/depressive swings in bipolar illness.

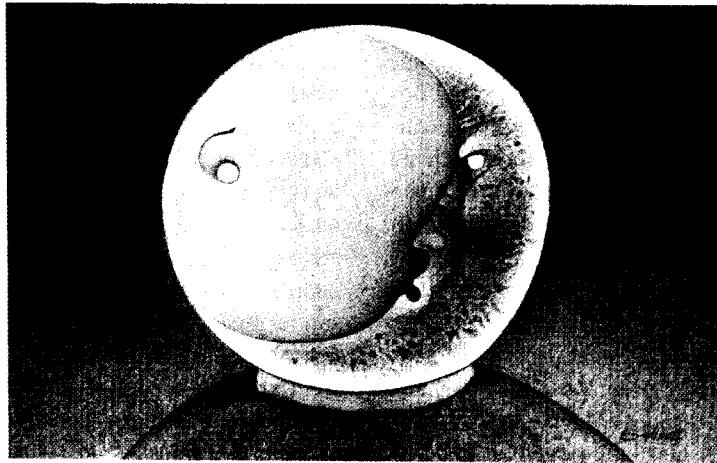
Biochemical evidence from animal studies strongly supports the linking of stress to affective disorders. When an animal (or, presumably, a human being) is under stress, the body responds by adjusting the levels of specific neurotransmitters. These changes somehow enable the body to function better in higher gear. Administering lithium or antidepressants to animals causes similar changes to occur, perhaps because the drugs somehow regulate the amounts of neurotransmitters released in the brain. According to

Potter, "What we could be seeing is a reduced ability of the body's stress-handling system to adapt, such that neurotransmitter levels do not change the way they should." Potter guesses that genetic defects diminish the system's resiliency, by altering biochemical processes that help to produce nerve-cell membranes and to maintain them in proper working order. After re-

peated stresses throughout a person's life, the system finally degrades and provokes the affective disorder.

A way to test this hypothesis is to look for the abnormal genes that should exist in people who have affective disorders. One method is to scan the DNA of normal and mentally ill people bit by bit until a difference appears. This strategy was impossible before the development a few years ago of recombinant-DNA technology, and even now it is a needle-in-the-haystack job. Alternatively, one can narrow the focus to those genes in the DNA molecule that are more likely than others to be defective. A group of researchers at the NIMH, led by Elliot Gershon, the chief of the NIMH's biological-psychiatry branch, speculated that the gene for beta-endorphin might be abnormal in people with affective disorders. The results of preliminary experiments show that small differences in the beta-endorphin gene do exist, but it is too early to tell what that finding means.

Gershon's group is also looking for genetic markers—biochemical traits whose presence or absence coincides with the presence or absence of a disease, and thus, it is reasoned, of a gene that causes the disease to be expressed. Such a marker should identify people whose chances of contracting a mental illness are high. In order to be useful, though, a marker must be easy to detect and be



present throughout a person's life, especially when the person is not ill. The marker should also correlate with a single disorder.

There is one good marker candidate at the moment. When a molecule of neurotransmitter crosses the synapse between one neuron and another, it binds to a structure on the surface of its destination known as a "receptor." Gershon's group has found that the receptor for the neurotransmitter acetylcholine is more sensitive in persons with histories of affective disorders than in persons with no such histories.

John Nurnberger, Jr., a research psychiatrist at the NIMH, is preparing an ambitious project that will not only test the usefulness of the acetylcholine receptor's sensitivity as a genetic marker but also provide some insight into the mechanisms of affective illness. He plans to measure the responsiveness of the acetylcholine receptor in seventy-five children of depressed or manic-depressive patients, and to follow the children for ten years to see if they become ill. He will compare the results with those for a control group of seventy-five children from families with no history of mental illness. Nurnberger will also study the subjects' environments over the ten-year period, which could provide valuable information about the role that stress and other emotional burdens play in triggering the disorders. In this way, the experiment will address the most basic question in psychiatry: Is severe mental illness genetically determined or merely predisposed?

In the 1960s and 1970s, studies of the incidence of mental illness in families, in twins, and in children adopted at birth who had a mentally ill natural parent clearly proved that severe mental illnesses are heritable. These studies showed, for example, that a child with one parent who suffers from manic depression stands a 25 percent chance of becoming depressive or manic depressive. If both parents are manic depressive, the odds rise to between 50 and 75 percent. But the studies did not prove that heredity is sufficient to account for psychiatric problems, because they did not rule out the possibility that some environmental insult is needed to bring a latent illness to the fore.

Nurnberger's study has several possible outcomes. One is that all children who have the marker will become ill and all those who lack the marker will remain healthy. This outcome would strongly suggest that the gene that influences the receptor is also the gene responsible for affective disorders, and that it alone has decided the children's fate. If environment makes a difference, then those with the marker who lead stressful lives should show a higher incidence of affective disorder than those with the marker who lead a more peaceful existence. A third possibility is that some children who do not have the marker will become ill. This outcome could mean that the gene affecting the acetylcholine receptor's sensitivity is but one of several that can give rise to depression and manic depression. Or it could mean that the receptor's sensitivity isn't related to these illnesses, after all.

MUCH LESS IS KNOWN ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA THAN about the affective disorders. Psychiatrists think of schizophrenia as a cognitive disease—one that affects comprehension, judgment, memory, and reasoning more than mood. It is variously characterized by a set of positive symptoms (delusions, hallucinations, and so forth) and negative symptoms (the loss of goal-directed behavior, the loss of empathy for others, withdrawal from social interaction, and ambivalence). According to E. Fuller Torrey, a clinical and research psychiatrist at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Washington, D.C., the usual age of onset of schizophrenia is between sixteen and twenty-five. The illness becomes progressively worse without treatment. People with schizophrenia, contrary to popular lore, do not have split personalities.

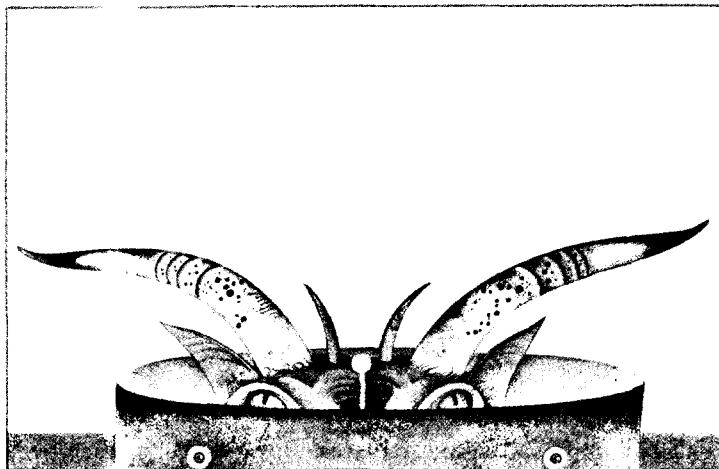
Two years ago, I had the opportunity to tour the psychiatric ward of the William S. Middleton Veterans' Hospital, in Madison, Wisconsin, to see the effects of schizophrenia firsthand. There I saw what I then thought were cases typical of all schizophrenics: middle-aged men who, because (I supposed) of the powerful drugs they were given, were sitting motionless in the patient lounge, looking at nothing in particular, not talking, and heedless of the stranger who stared at them. It was frightening to see people so lost to human contact. A month later, however, I saw a much different picture of the disease at Madison's Off the Square Club. Located in an old house three blocks from the state capitol building, the club is a social hall for people who have been hospitalized at least once for psychiatric illness—mostly schizophrenia. The members were arguing about politics and sports, playing cards, telling jokes, bumming cigarettes from one another, trading information about apartments and jobs—in short, doing the same things that hundreds of Madison residents do every summer night in their favorite taverns. I couldn't believe that the Off the Square group had the same illness as the men at the VA hospital. And, in fact, they did not.

Researchers think that the term "schizophrenia" describes a continuum of disorders. They would classify the Off the Square Club members as having a form of the disease that is characterized by a predominance of positive symptoms. Such symptoms can be moderated by antipsychotic-drug therapy. The veterans aren't so lucky. They, too, have positive symptoms, but their lives are dominated by negative symptoms, for which no effective drug treatment exists. The men at the hospital appeared oblivious not because of drugs but because of the illness itself.

These classifications, though they were derived from observations of behavior, have since been found to be reflected in the brain's physiology. Daniel Weinberger, a neuropsychiatrist, and his co-workers at St. Elizabeth's Hospital scanned the anatomical structure of the brains of schizophrenics using another recently developed medical technique—this one called "computed tomography," or CT. (Unlike PETT, which records biochemical reactions, CT is

used to take pictures of actual tissues; unlike conventional x-rays, its pictures are rendered in three dimensions.) Weinberger found that cavities inside the brain, called "ventricles," are enlarged in patients with the intractable form of schizophrenia and normal in patients who have the treatable form or who have some other psychiatric disorder. Where ventricles are abnormally large, the brain has atrophied. At first, it seemed plausible that the enlarged ventricles might be not a symptom of schizophrenia but, rather, a side effect—perhaps even one provoked by years of drug treatment. However, studies completed by Weinberger this year show, to the contrary, that enlarged ventricles are present with the very first outward signs of schizophrenia. What causes brain tissues to atrophy in only one subgroup of schizophrenic patients has not yet been discovered.

Although no genetic marker for schizophrenia has been found, surveys of children and parents suggest that schizophrenia could run in families. Schizophrenia may also have environmental components. For example, for the past ten years, E. Fuller Torrey has been accumulating evidence that viral infections early in life, perhaps before birth, are responsible for a certain percentage of schizophrenias. He has found that a third of the schizophrenic patients he examined had an antibody (usually an artifact of a past infection) against cytomegalovirus (CMV) in their cerebrospinal fluid—a solution that is as essential to the brain as blood. Torrey discovered such antibodies only rarely in patients with other neurological ailments, and he saw them virtually never in healthy people. He readily admits that his finding does not prove that the viral infection had anything to do with the cases of schizophrenia, but argues that other data about CMV and viral infections lend weight to the hypothesis that the two are related. Torrey says, "First, CMV is a member of the herpes-virus family, which is known to have an affinity for nerve tissue, and CMV has been shown in animals to have a special affinity for the limbic system, the region of the brain that's affected in schizophrenia. Second, CMV infection is the most common recognized infectious cause of nervous-system damage in the fetus and the newborn infant. It is the major cause of deafness and also produces mental retardation, lowered IQ, and learning disabilities. Third, herpes-virus infections increase the brain's levels of dopamine—the neurotransmitter that is elevated in most persons with schizophrenia. Fourth, chlorpromazine (an antipsychotic drug) turns out also to suppress CMV replication. Fifth, herpes viruses can remain latent



and not produce signs of infection for years. And, finally, herpes encephalitis often presents itself as sudden-onset schizophrenia."

This evidence adds up to a strong case that CMV, or a related virus, plays a causative role, but until someone finds the virus itself in brain tissue taken from autopsied schizophrenia victims, the hypothesis cannot begin to be proved. As recently as two years ago, identifying such a virus in the brain seemed nearly impossible. Today, however, recombinant-DNA technology can be used to produce chemical probes for the genetic material of viruses. If a virus is found, the next question is whether schizophrenia is caused by a recurring infection that produces the relapses associated with the disease or is the result of a one-time infection whose damage shows its effects later in

life. If the infection is recurring, then some future antiviral agents might be used to treat schizophrenia and even to cure certain cases.

THE LACK OF PRECISE definitions for depression, manic depression, and schizophrenia has been one of the chief obstacles to research in biological psychiatry. The first two edi-

tions of psychiatry's standard reference work—the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1952 and 1968—consisted of vague descriptions, some no more than a paragraph long, of the more common features of psychiatric illness. A psychiatrist who turned to either edition could have diagnosed a person in chronic pain, for example, as severely depressed. Moreover, the *DSM* offered little guidance in distinguishing between clinical depression and mere unhappiness.

For a patient, misdiagnosis obstructs treatment and can cause a condition to worsen; for researchers, skimpy diagnostic criteria have made the interpretation of data difficult or impossible. One of the most important tenets of science is that experiments be reproducible, but how are researchers to repeat an experiment if they can't be sure that all the subjects have had the same complaint? And how are they to generate and test theories when the object of their work is only loosely defined?

Biological psychiatry was helped by the publication of the third edition of the *DSM*, in 1980. This edition contains strict criteria (based on advances in psychiatric knowledge and backed up by repeated trial diagnoses of large populations of patients and extensive reviews by clinicians) that must be satisfied before a particular illness can be diag-

nosed. Criteria that would rule out a diagnosis are also listed. According to Robert L. Spitzer, the psychiatrist who oversaw the publication of the *DSM-III*, the new edition "allows researchers for the first time to be reasonably confident that they are working with a well-defined population of ill patients."

Even with these improvements in the *DSM*, however, the potential pitfalls of psychiatric diagnosis remain an impediment to investigations of the links between biology and psychosis. In all other branches of medicine, laboratory tests are relied on to confirm or contradict a doctor's judgment. For example, if a person complained of hunger, constant thirst, and a lack of energy, the doctor would suspect diabetes, but would back up this diagnosis by submitting the patient to a glucose-tolerance test. Although no tests to supplement the psychiatric interview are yet in standard use, some possibilities are being evaluated. One of these, announced in June by scientists at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, in Chicago, measures the concentration in urine of the compound phenyl acetate. This substance is a product of the breakdown of 2-phenylethylamine, a chemical in the brain whose level has been found to be markedly low in 70 percent of patients with depression.

Another obstacle to research in biological psychiatry has been the lack of active interest in it. Until recently, mental illness was largely ignored by neurologists (MDs whose specialty is treating disorders of the nervous system). Neuroscientists (researchers who study the nervous system rather than treat it) haven't paid much attention to mental illness either. According to Floyd Bloom, a neuroscientist at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, in La Jolla, California, "Modern neuroscience is only thirty years old, about the same age as modern biological psychiatry. It wasn't that neurologists and neuroscientists weren't interested in mental illness. It's that these diseases were too complex to tackle using the theories that neuroscience was based on before the 1950s. Don't forget that it wasn't until the sixties, even the early seventies, that most psychiatrists accepted the notion that mental illness is a biological brain disorder, and since there are no good animal models of the disorders for us to study, we need to have psychiatrists interested enough in biological research to perform many of the important experiments."

Not until recently has psychiatric training begun to emphasize biochemistry and neurology, however, and thus the number of psychiatrists engaged in the research—though on the rise—is relatively small. The widespread prescription of antipsychotics, antidepressants, and lithium virtually emptied psychiatric hospitals all over the world. Ac-

cording to Richard Jed Wyatt, the psychiatrist who is the head of the Adult Psychiatry Branch of the NIMH at St. Elizabeth's, "The advent of drug therapy should have encouraged the practitioners of mental-health care, because it enabled them to get rid of their patients' worst symptoms so that they—the therapists—could concentrate on helping those patients get along in society, and help them solve many of the psychological problems that they had developed as a *result* of being ill." Wyatt says that, instead, "the success of drug therapy gave permission to many of the best clinical psychiatrists and psychologists to move into treating other problems." It has been suggested that psychiatrists may have felt that the toughest work had been done.

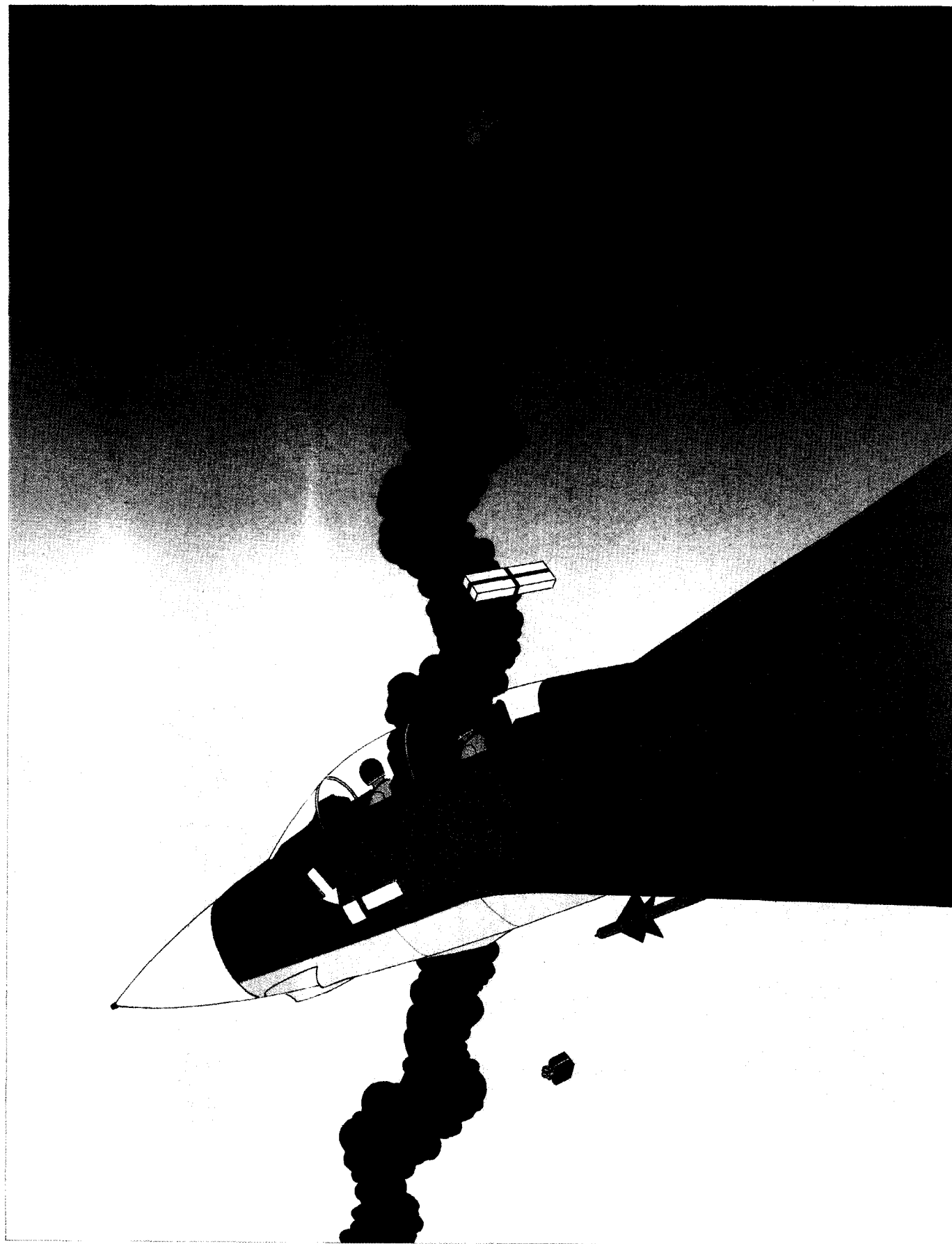
Lately, the pace of advance in biological psychiatry has quickened. As psychiatrists are schooled in the biological point of view, they learn how many questions remain to be answered. Moreover, scientists from other disciplines—neurology, virology, nutrition, and so forth—have begun to see a place in biological psychiatry for their knowledge, skills, and ideas.

The first goal of the research is better treatments, if not cures, for schizophrenia and the affective disorders. Drug therapy is far from perfect. Antipsychotics do a creditable job of alleviating the positive symptoms of schizophrenia and preventing their recurrence, but do nothing for the negative symptoms. Moreover, these drugs have undesirable side effects, the worst of which is tardive dyskinesia, a disorder characterized by involuntary movements and incoordination, which can develop after some years of treatment. As for the drugs used to treat the affective disorders, lithium does not always control depressive episodes, and antidepressants, which do improve mood, can also trigger mania in manic-depressive patients. The problem, according to Samuel J. Keith, the chief of the NIMH Center for Studies of Schizophrenia, is one of specificity. He says, "Today's drugs are too general. They work because they alter many different biochemical processes that go on inside the brain. One result is that mood or behavior becomes more normal, but another result is that you get side effects, because the drugs affect more than they have to."

Advances in molecular biology and imaging techniques have made the brain more accessible than ever before, and basic knowledge is growing exponentially. Many scientists believe that the information needed to design drugs that interfere only with a disease, leaving the rest of the brain alone, is within reach. The more distant hope is that, as the predictability of molecules and the vagaries of behavior are brought together within a single field of study, the causes of mental illnesses will be discovered. □

LAT. 90°N, LONG. 0°

BY GUY BILLOUT

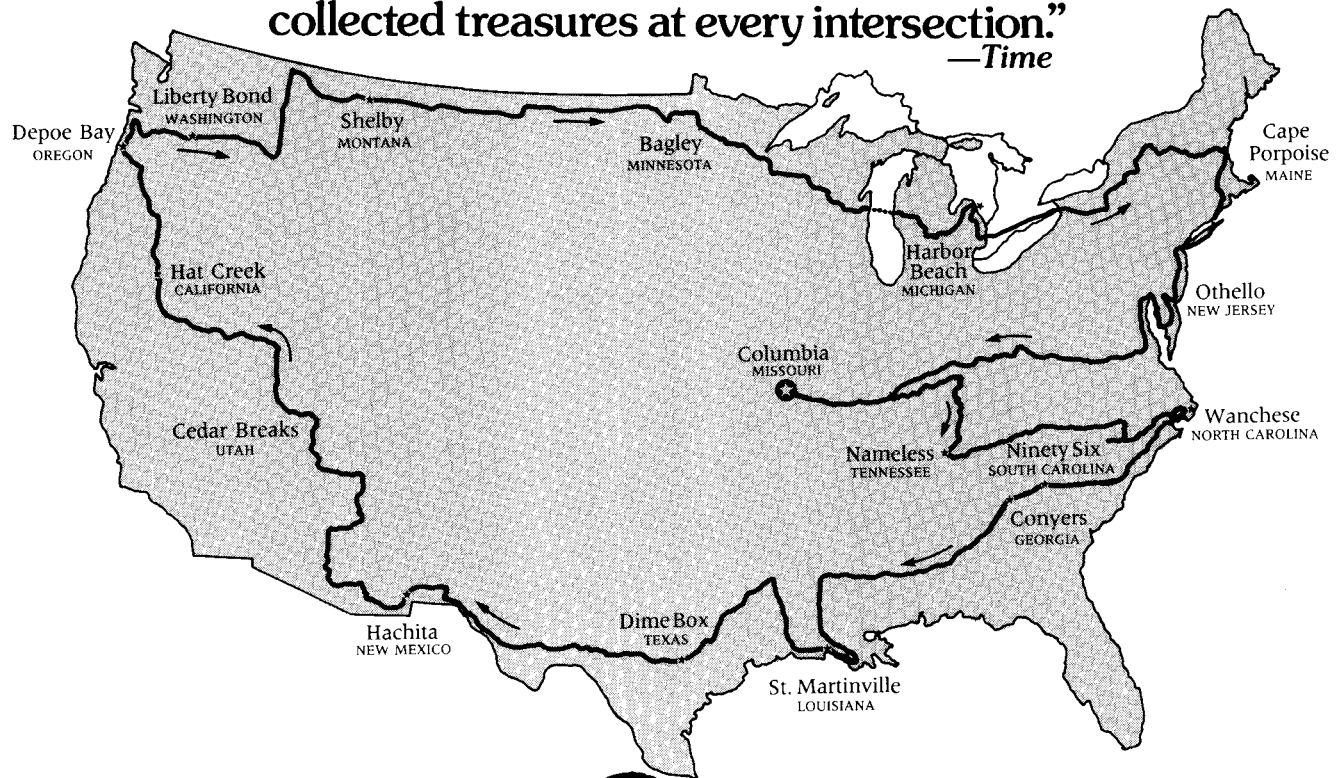


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ABOUT BOSTON

A SHORT STORY

BY WARD JUST

BETH WAS TALKING AND I WAS LISTENING. SHE said. "This was years ago. I was having a little tryst. On a Thursday, in New York, in the afternoon. He telephoned: 'Is it this Thursday or next?' I told him it was never, if he couldn't remember the *week*. Well." She laughed. "It makes your point about letters. Never would've happened if we'd written letters because you write something and you remember it. Don't you?"

"Usually," I said.

"There isn't a record of anything anymore, it's just telephone calls and bad memory."

"I've got a filing cabinet full of letters," I said, "and most of them are from ten years ago and more. People wrote a lot in the sixties, maybe they wanted a record of what they thought. There was a lot to think about, and it seemed a natural thing to do, write a letter to a friend, what with everything that was going on."

"I wonder if they're afraid," she said.

"No written record? No," I said. "They don't have the time. They won't make the time and there aren't so many surprises now, thanks to the sixties. We're surprised-out. They don't write and they don't read either."

"That one read," she said, referring to the man in the tryst. "He read all the time—history, biography. Sports books, line-backers' memoirs, the strategy of the full-court press." She lowered her voice. "And politics."

"Well," I said. I knew who it was now.

"But he didn't know the week." She lit a cigarette, staring at the match a moment before depositing it, just so, in the ashtray. "You always wrote letters."

I smiled. "A few close friends."

She smiled back. "Where do you think we should begin?"

"Not at the beginning."

"No, you know that as well as I do."

I said, "Probably better."

"Not better," she said.

"I don't know if I'm the man—"

"No," she said firmly. She stared at me across the room, then turned to look out the window. It was dusk, and the dying sun caught the middle windows of the Hancock tower, turning them a brilliant, wavy orange. In profile, with her sharp features and her short black hair, she looked like a schoolgirl. She said, "You're the man, all right. I want you to do it. I'd feel a lot more comfortable, we've known each other so long. Even now, after all this time, we don't have to finish sentences. It'd be hard for me, talking about it to a stranger."

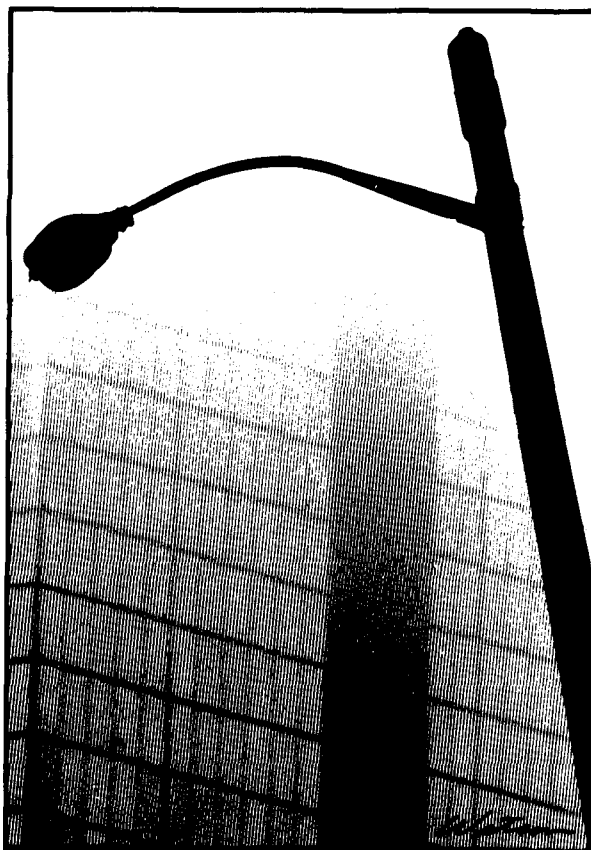
"Sometimes that's easiest," I said.

"Not for me it isn't."

"All right," I said at last. "But if at any time it gets awkward for you—" I was half hoping she'd reconsider. But she waved her hand in a gesture of dismissal, subject closed.

She was sitting on the couch in the corner of my office, and now she rose to stand at the window and watch the last of the sun reflected on the windows of the Hancock. A Mondrian among Turners, she had called it, its blue mirrors a new physics in the Back Bay. And who cared if in the beginning its windows popped out like so many ill-fitting contact lenses. The Hancock governed everything around it, Boston's past reflected in Boston's future. And it was miraculous that in the cascade of falling glass the casualties were so few.

I watched her: at that angle and in the last of the light her features softened and she was no longer a schoolgirl. I checked my watch, then rang my assistant and said she could lock up; we were through for the day. I fetched a yellow legal pad and a pen and sat in the



leather chair, facing Beth. She was at the window, fussing with the cord of the venetian blind. She turned suddenly, with a movement so abrupt that I dropped my pad; the blind dropped with a crash. There had always been something violent and unpredictable in her behavior. But now she only smiled winningly, nodded at the sideboard, and asked for a drink before we got down to business.

I HAVE PRACTICED LAW IN THE BACK BAY FOR ALMOST twenty-five years. After Yale I came to Boston with the naive idea of entering politics. The city had a rowdy quality I liked; it reminded me of Chicago, a city of neighborhoods, which wasn't ready for reform. But since I am a lapsed Catholic, neither Irish nor Italian, neither Yankee nor Democrat nor rich, I quickly understood that for me there were no politics in Boston. Chicago is astronomically remote from New England, and it was of no interest to anyone that I had been around politicians most of my life and knew the code. My grandfather had been, briefly, a congressman from the suburbs of Cook County, and I knew how to pull strings. But in Boston my antecedents precluded everything but good-government committees and the United Way.

Beth and I were engaged then, and Boston seemed less daunting than New York, perhaps because she knew it so intimately; it was her town as Chicago was mine. I rented an apartment in the North End and for the first few months we were happy enough, I with my new job and she with her volunteer work at the Mass. General. We broke off the engagement after six months—the usual reasons—and I looked up to find myself behind the lines in enemy territory. I had misjudged Boston's formality and its network of tribal loyalties and had joined Hamlin & White, one of the old State Street firms. I assumed that H,W—as it had been known for a hundred years—was politically connected. An easy error to make, for the firm was counsel to Boston's largest bank and handled the wills and trusts of a number of prominent Brahmin Republicans, and old Hamlin had once been lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. In Chicago that would have spelled political, but in Boston it only spelled probate. There were thirty men in the firm, large for Boston in those days. The six senior men were Hamlin and Hamlin Junior and White III, and Chelm, Warner, and Diuguid. Among the associates were three or four recognizable Mayflower names. The six senior men were all physically large, well over six feet tall and in conspicuous good health, by which I mean ruddy complexions and a propensity to roughhouse. They all had full heads of hair, even old Hamlin, who was then eighty. Their talk was full of the jargon of sailing and golf, and in their company I felt the worst sort of provincial rube.

Of course I was an experiment—a balding, unathletic

Yale man from Chicago, of middling height, of no particular provenance, and book-smart. I was no one's cousin and no one's ex-roommate. But I was engaged to a Boston girl and I had been first in my class at Yale and the interview with Hamlin Junior had gone well. All of them in the firm spoke in that hard, open-mouthed bray peculiar to Massachusetts males of the upper classes. The exception was Hamlin Junior, who mumbled. When it was clear, after two years, that their experiment had failed—or had not, at any event, succeeded brilliantly—it was Hamlin Junior who informed me. He called me into his dark-brown office late one afternoon, poured me a sherry, and rambled for half an hour before he got to the point, which was that I was an excellent lawyer mumble mumble damned able litigator mumble mumble but the firm has its own personality, New England salt sort of thing ha-ha mumble sometimes strange to an outsider but it's the way we've always done things mumble question of style and suitability, sometimes tedious but can't be helped wish you the best you're a damned able trial man, and of course you've a place here so long's you want though in fairness I wanted mumble make it known that you wouldn't be in the first foursome as it were mumble mumble. Just one question, I've always wondered: 'S really true that you wanted to go into politics here?

It was my first professional failure, and in my anger and frustration I put it down to simple snobbery. I did not fit into their clubs, and I hated the North Shore and was not adept at games. I was never seen “around” during the winter or on the Cape or the Islands or in Maine in the summer. I spent my vacations in Europe, and most weekends I went to New York, exactly as I did when I was at law school in New Haven. New York remains the center of my social life. Also, I was a bachelor. Since the breakup of my engagement, I had become an aggressive bachelor. Beth was bitter and I suspected her of spreading unflattering stories. Of course this was not true, but in my humiliation I believed that it was and that as a consequence the six senior men had me down as homosexual. In addition, I was a hard drinker in a firm of hard drinkers though unlike them I never had whiskey on my breath in the morning and I never called in sick with Monday gripe. I could never join in the hilarious retelling of locker-room misadventures. They drank and joked. I drank and didn't joke.

When I left H,W, I opened an office with another disgruntled provincial—he was from Buffalo, even further down the scale of things than Chicago—half expecting to fail but determined not to and wondering what on earth I would do and where I would go, now that I'd been drummed out of my chosen city: blackballed. Young litigators are not as a rule peripatetic: you begin in a certain city and remain there; you are a member of the bar, you know the system, you build friendships and a clientele and a reputation. Looking back on it, Deshais and I took a terrible risk. But we worked hard and prospered, and now there are twenty lawyers in our firm, which we have per-

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versely designed to resemble a squad of infantry in a World War II propaganda movie: Irish, Italians, Jews, three blacks in the past ten years, one Brahmin, Deshais, and me. Of course we are always quarreling; ours is not a friendly, clubby firm. In 1974, we bought a private house, a handsome brownstone, in the Back Bay, only two blocks from my apartment on Commonwealth Avenue. This is so convenient, such an agreeable way to live—it is my standard explanation to my New York friends who ask why I remain here—that we decided not to expand the firm because it would require a larger building and all of us love the brownstone, even the younger associates who must commute from Wayland or Milton. Sometimes I think it is the brownstone and the brownstone alone that holds the firm together.

I SUPPOSE IT IS OBVIOUS THAT I HAVE NO AFFECTION for this spoiled city and its noisy inhabitants. It is an indolent city. It is racist to the bone and in obvious political decline and like any declining city is by turns peevish and arrogant. It is a city without civility or civic spirit, or Jews. The Jews, with their prodigious energies, have tucked themselves away in Brookline, as the old aristocrats, with their memories and trust funds, are on the lam on the North Shore. Remaining are the resentful Irish and the furious blacks. Meanwhile, the tenured theory class issues its pronouncements from the safety of Cambridge, confident that no authority will take serious notice. So the city of Boston closes in on itself, conceited, petulant, idle, and broke.

I observe this from a particular vantage point. To my surprise, I have become a divorce lawyer. The first cases I tried after joining forces with Deshais were complicated divorce actions. They were women referred to me by Hamlin Junior, cases considered—I think he used the word “fraught”—too mumble “fraught” for H.W. In Chicago we used the word “messy,” though all this was a long time ago; now they are tidy and without fault. However, then as now there was pulling and hauling over the money. Hamlin Junior admired my trial work and believed me discreet and respectable enough to represent in the first instance his cousin and in the second a dear friend of his wife’s. He said that he hoped the matter of the cousin would be handled quietly, meaning without a lengthy trial and without publicity, but that if the case went to trial he wanted her represented by a lawyer *ahem* who was long off the tee. You know what it is you must do? he asked. I nodded. At that time divorces were purchased; you bought a judge for the afternoon. Happily, the cousin was disposed of in conference, quietly and very expensively for her husband. The success of that case caused Hamlin Junior to send me the second woman, whose disposition was not quite so quiet. Fraught it certainly was, and even more expensive.

I was suddenly inside the bedroom, hearing stories the obverse of those I had heard after hours at H.W. The view

from the bedroom was different from the view from the locker room. It was as if a light-bulb joke had been turned around and told from the point of view of the bulb. Hundred-watt Mazda shocks WASP couple! I discovered that I had a way with women in trouble. That is precisely because I do not pretend to understand them, as a number of my colleagues insist that they “understand women.” But I do listen. I listen very carefully, and then I ask questions and listen again. Then they ask me questions and I am still listening hard, and when I offer my answers they are brief and as precise as I can make them. And I never, never overpromise. No woman has ever rebuked me with “But you *said*, and now you’ve broken your word.”

The cousin and the wife’s friend were satisfied and told Hamlin Junior, who said nothing to his colleagues. He seemed to regard me as the new chic restaurant in town, undiscovered and therefore underpriced; it would become popular soon enough, but meanwhile the food would continue excellent and the service attentive and the bill modest. For years he referred clients and friends to me, and I always accepted them even when they were routine cases and I had to trim my fees. And when Hamlin Junior died, I went to his funeral, and was not at all startled to see so many familiar female faces crowding the pews.

My divorce business was the beginning, and there was a collateral benefit—no, bonanza. I learned how money flows in Boston, and where; which were the rivers and which were the tributaries and which were the underground streams. Over the years, I have examined hundreds of trusts and discovered a multiformity of hidden assets, liquid and solid, floating and stationary, lettered and numbered, above ground and below. The trusts are of breathtaking ingenuity, the product of the flintiest minds in Massachusetts, and of course facilitated over the years by a willing legislature. And what has fascinated me from the beginning is this: The trust that was originally devised to avoid taxes or to punish a recalcitrant child or to siphon income or to “protect” an unworldly widow or to reach beyond the grave to control the direction of a business or a fortune or a marriage can fall apart when faced with the circumstances of the present, an aggrieved client, and a determined attorney.

This is not the sort of legal practice I planned, but it is what I have. Much of what I have discovered in divorce proceedings I have replicated in my trust work, adding a twist here and there to avoid unraveling by someone like me, sometime in the future. Wills and trusts are now a substantial part of my business, since I have access to the flintiest minds in Massachusetts. Turn, and turn about. However, it is a risible anomaly of the upper classes of Boston that the estates have grown smaller and the trusts absurdly complex—Alcatraz to hold juvenile delinquents.

So one way and another I am in the business of guaranteeing the future. A trust, like a marriage, is a way of getting a purchase on the future. That is what I tell my clients, especially the women; women have a faith in the

future that men, as a rule, do not. I am careful to tell my clients that although that is the objective, it almost never works; or it does not work in the way they intend it to work. It is all too difficult reading the past, without trying to read the future as well. It is my view that men, at least, understand this, having, as a rule, a sense of irony and proportion. At any event, this is my seat at the Boston opera. It is lucrative and fascinating work. There was no compelling reason, therefore, not to listen to the complaint of Beth Earle Doran Greer, my former fiancée.

SHE SAID QUIETLY, "IT'S finished."

I said nothing.

She described their last year together, the two vacations and the month at Edgartown, happy for the most part. They had one child, a boy, now at boarding school. It had been a durable marriage, fifteen years; the first one had lasted less than a year, and she had assumed that despite various troubles this one would endure. Then last Wednesday he said he was leaving her and his lawyer would be in touch.

"Has he?"

"No," she said.

"Who is he?"

She named a State Street lawyer whom I knew by reputation. He was an excellent lawyer. I was silent again, waiting for her to continue.

"Frank didn't say anything more than that."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I think he's at the farm." I waited again, letting the expression on my face do the work. There were two questions. Is he alone? Do you want him back? She said again, "It's finished." Then, the answer to the other question: "There is no one else." I looked at her, my face in neutral. She said, "Hard as that may be to understand."

Not believe, *understand*; a pointed distinction. I nodded, taking her at her word. It was hard, her husband was a great bon vivant.

"That's what he says, and I believe him. His sister called me to say that there isn't anybody else, but I didn't need her to tell me. Believe me, I know the signs. There isn't a sign I don't know and can't see a mile away, and he doesn't show any of them. Five years ago—that was something else. But she's married and not around anymore, and that's



over and done with. And besides, if there was someone else he'd tell me. It'd be like him."

I nodded again and made a show of writing on my pad.

"And there isn't anyone else with me either."

"Well," I said, and smiled.

"Is it a first?"

I laughed quietly. "Not a first," I said. "Maybe a second."

She laughed, and lit a cigarette. "You were afraid it would be another cliché, she would be twenty and just out of Radcliffe. Meanwhile, I would've taken up with the garage mechanic or the gamekeeper. Or Frank's best friend; they tell me that's chic now." She looked at me sideways and clucked. "You know me better than that. Clichés aren't my style."

I said, "I never knew you at all."

"Yes, you did," she said quickly. I said nothing. "You always listened, in those days you were a very good listener. And you're a good listener now."

"The secret of my success," I said. But I knew my smile was getting thinner.

"The mouthpiece who listens," she said. "That's what Nora told me, when she was singing your praises. Really, she did go on. Do they fall in love with you, like you're supposed to do with a psychiatrist?"

Nora was a client I'd represented in an action several years before, a referral from Hamlin Junior. She was a great friend of Beth's but a difficult woman and an impossible client. I said, "No."

"It was a pretty good marriage," she said after a moment's pause. "You'd think, fifteen years . . ." I leaned forward, listening. Presently, in order to focus the conversation, I would ask the first important question: What is it that you want me to do now? For the moment, though, I wanted to hear more. I have never regarded myself as a marriage counselor, but it is always wise to know the emotional state of your client. So far, Beth seemed admirably rational and composed, almost cold-blooded. I wondered if she had ever consulted a psychiatrist, then decided she probably hadn't. There was something impersonal about her locution "like you're supposed to." She said abruptly, "How did you get into this work? It's so unlike you. Remember the stories you told me about your grandfather and his friend? The relationship they had, and how that was the kind of lawyer you wanted to be?"

I remembered all right, but I was surprised that she did. My grandfather and I were very close, and when I was a youngster we lunched together every Saturday. My father drove me to the old man's office, in an unincorporated area of Cook County, near Blue Island. I'd take the elevator to the fourth floor, the building dark and silent on Saturday morning. My grandfather was always courteous and formal, treating me as he would treat an important adult. On Saturday mornings my grandfather met with Tom. Tom was his lawyer. I was too young to know exactly what they were talking about, though as I look back on it, their conversation was in a private language. There was a "matter" that needed "handling," or "a man"—perhaps "sound," perhaps "a screwball"—who had to be "turned." Often there was a sum of money involved—three, four, five thousand dollars. These questions would be discussed sparsely, long pauses between sentences. Then, as a signal that the conversation was near its end, my grandfather would say, "Now this is what I want to do," and his voice would fall. Tom would lean close to the old man, listening hard; I never saw him make a note. Then, "Now you figure out how I can do it." And Tom would nod, thinking, his face disappearing into the collar of his enormous camel's-hair coat. He never removed the coat, and he sat with his gray fedora in both hands, between his knees, turning it like the steering wheel of a car. When he finished thinking, he would rise and approach me and gravely shake hands. Then he would offer me a piece of licorice from the strand he kept in his coat, the candy furry with camel's hair. He pressed it on me until I accepted. I can remember him saying good-bye to my grandfather and, halting at the door, smiling slightly and winking. Tom would exit whistling, and more often than not my grandfather would make a telephone call, perhaps two, speaking inaudibly into the receiver. Finally, rumbling in his basso profundo, he would make the ritual call to the Chicago Athletic Club to reserve his usual table for two, "myself and my young associate."

In those days children were not allowed in the men's bar, so we ate in the main dining room, a huge chamber with high ceilings and a spectacular view of the lakefront. We sat at a table by the window, and on a clear day we could see Gary and Michigan City to the southeast. Long-hulled ore boats were smudges on the horizon. Once, during the war, we saw a pocket aircraft carrier, a training vessel for Navy pilots stationed at Great Lakes. The old man would wave his hand in the direction of the lake and speak of the Midwest as an ancient must have spoken of the Fertile Crescent: the center of the world, a homogeneous, God-fearing, hardworking *region*, its interior position protecting it from its numerous enemies. With a sweep of his hand he signified the noble lake and the curtain of smoke that hung over Gary's furnaces, thundering even on Saturdays. Industry, he'd say, *heavy* industry working at one hundred percent of capacity. Chicagoland, foundry to the world. His business was politics, he said; and his politics was business. "We can't let them take it away from us, all this . . ."

When the old man died, Tom was his principal pallbearer. It was a large funeral; the governor was present with his suite, along with a score or more of lesser politicians. Tom was dry-eyed, but I knew he was grieving. At the end of it he came over to me and shook my hand, solemnly as always, and said, "Your grandfather was one of the finest men who ever lived, a great friend, a great Republican, a great American, and a great client." I thought that an extraordinary inventory and was about to say so when he gripped my arm and exclaimed, "You ever need help of any kind, you come to me. That man and I . . ." He pointed at my grandfather's casket, still aboveground under its green canopy, then tucked his chin into the camel's hair. "We've been through the mill, fought every day of our lives. I don't know what will happen without him." He waved dispiritedly at the gravestones around us, stones as far as the eye could see, and lowered his voice so that I had to bend close to hear. "The world won't be the same without him," Tom said. "The Midwest's going to hell."

Tom died a few years later, without my having had a chance to take him up on his offer. But from my earliest days in that fourth-floor office I knew I would be a lawyer. I wanted to be Tom to someone great, and prevent the world from going to hell. Tom was a man who listened carefully to a complex problem, sifting and weighing possibilities. Then, settled and secure in his own mind, he figured a way to get from here to there. It was only an idiosyncrasy of our legal system that the route was never a straight line.

"I mean," she said brightly, leaning forward on the couch, "listening to a bunch of hysterical women with their busted marriages, that wasn't what I expected at all."

"They are not always hysterical," I said, "and some of them are men."

"And you never married," she said.

That was not true, but I let it pass.

"No," she said, rapping her knuckles on the coffee table. "You *were* married. I heard that, a long time ago. I heard that you were married, a whirlwind romance in Europe, but then it broke up right away."

"That's right," I said.

"She was French."

"English," I said.

"And there were no children."

"No," I said. We were silent while I walked to the sideboard, made a drink for myself, and refilled hers.

"Do you remember how we used to talk, that place on Hanover Street we used to go to, all that pasta and grappa? I practiced my Italian on them. Always the last ones out the door, running down Hanover Street to that awful place you had on—where was it?"

"North Street," I said.

"North Street. We'd get to dinner and then we'd go to your place and you'd take me back to Newton in your red Chevrolet. Three, four o'clock in the morning. I don't know how you got any work done, the hours we kept."

I nodded, remembering.

"And of course when I heard you'd been sacked at H,W, I didn't know what to think, except that it was for the best." She paused. "Which I could've told you if you'd asked." I handed her the highball and sat down, resuming my lawyerly posture, legs crossed, the pad in my lap. "Do you ever think about your grandfather? Or what would've happened if you'd gone back to Chicago instead of following me here? Whether you'd've gone into politics, like him?"

"I didn't follow you," I said. "We came together. It was where we intended to live, together."

"Whatever." She took a long swallow of her drink. "Chicago's such a different place from Boston, all that prairie. Boston's close and settled and old, so charming." I listened, tapping the pencil on my legal pad. It was dark now. At night the city seemed less close and settled. The cars in the street outside were bumper to bumper, honking. There was a snarl at the intersection, one car double-parked and another stalled. A car door slammed and there were angry shouts. She looked at me, smiling. "I don't want anything particular from him."

I made a note on my pad.

"I have plenty of money; so does he. Isn't that the modern way? No punitive damages?" She hesitated. "So there won't be any great opportunity to delve into the assets. And Frank's trust. Or mine."

I ignored that. "Of course there's little Frank."

She looked at me with the hint of a malicious grin. "How did you know his name?"

"Because I follow your every movement," I said, with as much sarcasm as I could muster. "For Christ's sake, Beth. I don't know how I know his name. People like Frank Greer always name their children after themselves."

"Don't get belligerent," she said. "A more devoted father—" she began and then broke off.

"Yes," I said.

"—he's devoted to little Frank." She hesitated, staring out the window for a long moment. She was holding her glass with both hands, in her lap. She said, "What was the name of that man, your grandfather's lawyer?"

"Tom," I said.

"God, yes," she said, laughing lightly. "Tom, one of those sturdy midwestern names."

"I think," I said evenly, "I think Tom is a fairly common name. I think it is common even in Boston."

She laughed again, hugely amused. "God, yes, it's common."

I glared at her, not at all surprised that she remembered which buttons worked and which didn't. Beth had an elephant's memory for any man's soft spots. Why Tom was one of mine was not so easily explained; Beth would have one explanation, I another. But of course she remembered. My background was always a source of tension between us, no doubt because my own attitude was ambiguous. She found my grandfather and Tom . . . quaint. They were

colorful provincials, far from her Boston milieu, and she condescended to them exactly as certain English condescend to Australians.

"It's a riot," she said.

"So," I said quietly, glancing at my watch. "What is it that you want me to do now?"

"A quick, clean divorce," she said. "Joint custody for little Frank, though it's understood he lives with me. Nothing changes hands, we leave with what we brought, *status quo ante*. I take my pictures, he takes his shotguns. Except, naturally, the house in Beverly. It's mine anyway, though for convenience it's in both our names. He understands that."

"What about the farm?"

"We split that, fifty-fifty."

"Uh-huh," I said.

"Is it always this easy?"

"We don't know how easy it'll be," I said carefully. "Until I talk to his lawyer. Maybe it won't be easy at all. It depends on what he thinks his grievances are."

"He hasn't got any."

"Well," I said.

"So it'll be easy," she said, beginning to cry.

WE HAD AGREED TO GO TO DINNER AFTER MEETING in my office. I proposed the Ritz; she countered with a French restaurant I had never heard of. She insisted, Boylston Street nouvelle cuisine, and I acceded, not without complaint. I told her about a client, a newspaperman who came to me every six years for his divorce. The newspaperman said that the nouvelle cuisine reminded him of the nouveau journalisme—a colorful plate, agreeably subtle, wonderfully presented with inspired combinations, and underdone. The portions were small, every dish had a separate sauce, and you were hungry when you finished. A triumph of style over substance.

She listened patiently, distracted.

I was trying to make her laugh. "But I can get a New York strip here, which they'll call an entrecôte, and there isn't a lot you can do to ruin a steak. Though they will try."

"You haven't changed," she said bleakly.

"Yes, I have," I said. "In the old days I would've been as excited about this place as you are. I'd know the names of the specialties of the house and of the chef. In the old days I was as al dente as the veggies. But not anymore." I glanced sourly around the room. The colors were pastel, various tints of yellow, even to a limp jonquil in the center of each table, all of it illuminated by candles thin as pencils and a dozen wee chandeliers overhead. It was very feminine and not crowded; expensive restaurants rarely were in Boston now; the money was running out.

"I'm sorry about the tears," she said.

I said, "Don't be."

"I knew I was going to bawl when I made that remark about Tom and you reacted."

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AB1



"Yes," I said. I'd known it too.

"It made me sad. It reminded me of when we were breaking up and all the arguments we had."

I smiled gamely. "I was *al dente* then, and I broke easily." I knew what she was leading up to, and I didn't want it. When the waiter arrived I ordered whiskey for us both, waiting for the little superior sneer and feeling vaguely disappointed when he smiled pleasantly and flounced off. I started to tell her a story but she cut me off, as I knew she would.

"It reminded me of that ghastly dinner and how awful everything was afterward."

I muttered something noncommittal, but the expression on her face told me she wanted more, so I said it was over and forgotten, part of the buried past, etcetera. Like hell. We had argued about the restaurant that night, as we had tonight, except I won and we went to the Union Oyster House. My parents were in town, my father ostensibly on business; in fact they were in Boston to meet Beth. The dinner did not go well from the beginning; the restaurant was crowded and the service indifferent. My parents didn't seem to care, but Beth was irritated—"The Union Oyster Tourist Trap"—and that in turn put me on edge, or perhaps it was the other way around. Halfway through dinner, I suspect in an effort to salvage things, my father shyly handed Beth a wrapped package. It was a bracelet he had selected himself; even my mother didn't know about it. It was so unlike him, and such a sweet gesture, tears jumped to my eyes. Even before she opened it, I knew it would not be right. Beth had a particular taste in jewelry and as a consequence rarely wore any. I hoped she could disguise her feelings, but as it happened she giggled. And did not put the bracelet on, but hurried it into her purse, after leaning over the table and kissing my father. He did not fail to notice the bracelet rushed out of sight. Probably he didn't miss the giggle, either. In the manner of families, after a suitable silent interval my father and I commenced to quarrel. On the surface it was a quarrel about businessmen and professional men, but actually it had to do with the merits of the East and the merits of the Midwest and my father's knowledge that I had rejected the values of his region. The Midwest asserted its claims early, and if you had a restless nature you left. It forced you to leave; there were no halfway measures in the heartland, at that time a province as surely as Franche-Comté or Castile, an interior region pressed by the culture of the coasts, defensive, suspicious, and claustrophobic. When I left I tried to explain to him that a New Yorker's restlessness or ambition could take him to Washington as a Bostonian's could take him to New York, the one city representing power and the other money. No midwesterner, making the momentous decision to leave home, would go from Chicago to Cleveland or from Minneapolis to Kansas City. These places are around the corner from one another. The Midwest is the same wherever you go, the towns larger or smaller but the culture identical. Leaving the Midwest, one perforce re-

jects the Midwest and its values; its sense of inferiority—so I felt then—prevented any return. In some way it had failed. What sound reason could there be for leaving God's country, the very soul of the nation, to live and work on the cluttered margins? It had failed you and you had failed it, whoring after glitter. My father's chivalry did not allow him to blame "that girl" publicly, but I knew that privately he did. Too much—too much Boston, too much money, too determined, too self-possessed. He hated to think that his son—flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood!—could be led out of Chicagoland by a woman. The image I imagine it brought to his mind was of an ox dumbly plodding down a road, supervised by a young woman lightly flicking its withers with a stick. That ghastly dinner!

"The thing is." She smiled wanly, back in the present now: that is, her own life, and what she had made of it. "It's so—*tiresome*. I know the marriage is over, it's probably been finished for years. But starting over again. I don't want to start over again. I haven't the energy." She sighed. "He's said for years that he's got to find himself. He's forty-eight years old and he's lost and now he wants to be found. And I'm sure he will be."

"Usually it's the other way around," I said. "These days, it's the women who want to find themselves. Or get lost, one or the other."

"Frank has a feminine side." I nodded, thinking of Frank Greer as a pastel. Frank in lime-green and white, cool and pretty as a gin and tonic. "But the point isn't Frank," Beth said. "It's me. I don't want to start over again. I started over again once and that didn't work and then I started over again and it was fun for a while and then it was a routine, like everything else. I like the routine. And I was younger then."

I did not quite follow that, so I said, "I know."

"Liar," she said. "How could you? You've never been married."

"Beth," I said.

She looked at me irritably. "That doesn't count. You've got to be married for at least five years before it's a marriage. And there have to be children, or at least a child. Otherwise it's just shacking up and you can get out of it as easily and painlessly as you got into it, which from the sound of yours was pretty easy and painless."

I looked away while the waiter set down our drinks and, with a flourish, the menus.

"How long ago was it?"

"Almost twenty years ago," I said.

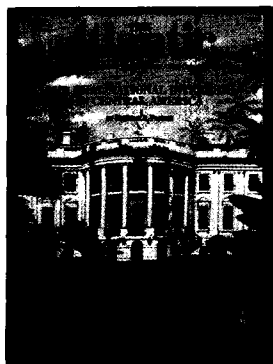
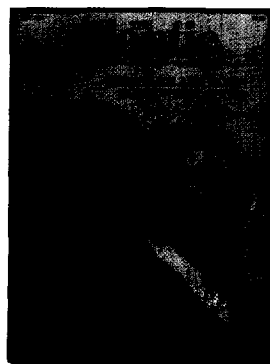
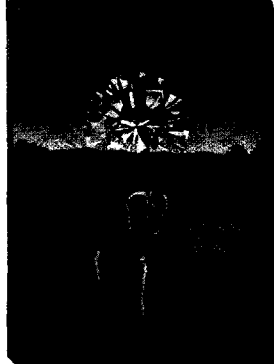
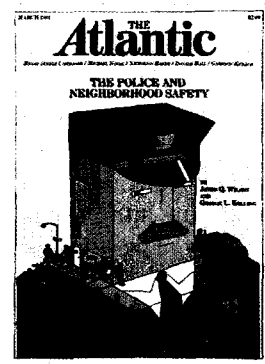
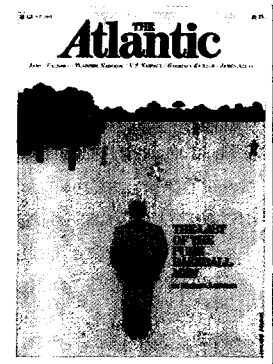
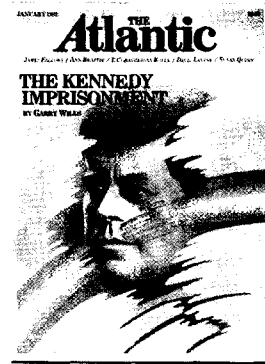
"Where is she now?"

I shrugged. I had no idea. When she left me she went back to London. I heard she had a job there; then, a few years ago, I heard she was living in France, married, with children. Then I heard she was no longer in France but somewhere else on the Continent, unmarried now.

"That's what I mean," she said. "You don't even know where she is."

"Well," I said. "She knows where I am."

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"What was her name?"

"Rachel," I said.

Beth thought a moment. "Was she Jewish?"

"Yes," I said.

Beth made a little sound, but did not comment. The amused look on her face said that my father must have found Rachel even more unsuitable than Beth. As it happened, she was right, but it had nothing to do with Rachel's Jewishness. She was a foreigner with pronounced political opinions. "And you like living alone," Beth said.

"At first I hated it," I said. "But I like it now and I can't imagine living any other way. It's what I do, live alone. You get married, I don't. Everyone I know gets married and almost everyone I know gets divorced."

"Well, you see it from the outside."

"It's close enough," I said.

"Yes, but it's not *real*." She glanced left into Boylston Street. It was snowing, and only a few pedestrians were about, bending into the wind. She shivered when she looked at the stiff-legged pedestrians, their movements so spiritless and numb against the concrete of the sidewalk, the sight bleaker still by contrast with the pale monochrome and the fragrance of the restaurant. Outside was a dark, malicious, European winter, Prague perhaps, or Moscow. "We might've made it," she said tentatively, still looking out the window.

I said nothing. She was dead wrong about that.

She sat with her chin in her hand, staring into the blowing snow. "But we were so different, and you were so bad."

The waiter was hovering and I turned to ask him the specialties of the day. They were a tiny bird en croûte, a fish soufflé, and a vegetable ensemble. Beth was silent, inspecting the menu; she had slipped on a pair of half-glasses for this chore. I ordered a dozen oysters and an entrecôte, medium well. I knew that if I ordered it medium well I had a fair chance of getting it medium rare. Then I ordered a baked potato and a Caesar salad and another drink. The waiter caught something in my tone and courteously suggested that medium well was excessive. I said all right, if he would promise a true medium rare. Beth ordered a fish I never heard of and called for the wine list. The waiter seemed much happier dealing with Beth than with me. They conferred over the wine list for a few moments, and then he left.

She said, "You're always so defensive."

"I don't like these places, I told you that." I heard the Boston whine in my voice and retreated a step. "The waiter's okay."

"You never did like them," she said. "But at least *before* . . ." She shook her head, exasperated.

"Before, what?" I asked.

"At least you were a provincial, there was an excuse."

I pulled at my drink, irritated. But when I saw her smiling slyly I had to laugh. Nothing had changed, though we had not seen each other in fifteen years and had not spoken in twenty. The occasion fifteen years ago was a wedding

reception. I saw her standing in a corner talking to Frank Greer. She was recently divorced from Doran. I was about to approach to say hello; then I saw the expression on her face and withdrew. She and Greer were in another world, oblivious of the uproar around them, and I recognized the expression: it was the one I thought was reserved for me. Now, looking at her across the restaurant table, it was as if we had never been apart, as if our attitudes were frozen in aspic. We were still like a divided legislature, forever arguing over the economy, social policy, the defense budget, and the cuisine in the Senate dining room. The same arguments, conducted in the same terms; the same old struggle for control of our future. Her prejudice, my pride.

"You have to tell me one thing." She turned to inspect the bottle the waiter presented, raising her head so she could see through the half-glasses. She touched the label of the wine with her fingernails and said yes, it was fine, excellent really, and then, turning, her head still raised, she assured me that I would find it drinkable, since it came from a splendid little chateau vineyard near the Wisconsin Dells. The waiter looked at her dubiously and asked whether he should open it now and put it on ice, and she said yes, of course, she wanted it so cold she'd need her mittens to pour it. I was laughing and thinking how attractive she was, a woman whose humor improved with age, if she would just let up a little on the other. Also, I was waiting for the "one thing" I would have to tell her.

I said, "You're a damn funny woman."

"I have good material," she said.

"Not always," I replied.

"The one thing," she said, "that I can't figure out. Never could figure out. Why did you stay here? This isn't your kind of town at all, never was. It's so circumspect, and sure of itself. I'm surprised you didn't go back to Chicago after you were canned by H. W."

"I like collapsing civilizations," I said. "I'm a connoisseur of collapse and systems breakdown and bankruptcy—moral, ethical, and financial. So Boston is perfect." I thought of the town where I grew up, so secure and prosperous then, so down-at-heel now, the foundry old, exhausted, incidental, and off the subject. We lived in Chicago's muscular shadow and were thankful for it, before the world went to hell. "And I wasn't about to be run out of town by people like that," I added truculently.

"So it was spite," she said.

"Not spite," I said equably. "Inertia."

"And you're still spending weekends in New York?"

I nodded. Not as often now as in the past, though.

"Weird life you lead," she said.

I said, "What's so weird about it?"

"Weekdays here, weekends in New York. And you still have your flat near the brownstone, the same one?"

I looked at her with feigned surprise. "How did you know about my flat?"

"For God's sake," she said. "Nora's a friend of mine."

It was never easy to score a point on Beth Earle. I said, "I've had it for almost twenty years. And I'll have it for twenty more. It's my Panama Canal. I bought it, I paid for it, it's mine, and I intend to keep it."

She shook her head, smiling ruefully. She said that she had lived in half a dozen houses over the years and remembered each one down to the smallest detail: the color of the tile in the bathroom and the shape of the clothes closet in the bedroom. She and Doran had lived in Provincetown for a year, and then had moved to Gloucester. That was when Doran was trying to paint. Then, after Doran, she lived alone in Marblehead. When she was married to Frank Greer they went to New York, then returned to Boston; he owned an apartment on Beacon Hill. They lived alone there for two years, and then moved to Beverly—her idea; she was tired of the city. She counted these places on her fingers. "Six," she said. "And all this time, you've been in the same place in the Back Bay." She was leaning across the table, and now she looked up. The waiter placed a small salad in front of her and the oysters in front of me. The oysters were Cotuits. She signaled for the wine and said that "Monsieur" would taste. She told the waiter I was a distinguished gourmet, much sought after as a taster, and that my wine cellar in Michigan City was the envy of the region. She gave the impression that the restaurant was lucky to have me as a patron. The waiter shot me a sharp look and poured the wine into my glass. I pronounced it fine. Actually, I said it was "swell," and then, gargling heartily, "dandy." I gave Beth one of the oysters and insisted that she eat it the way it was meant to be eaten, naked out of the shell, without catsup or horseradish. She sucked it up, and then leaned across the table once again. "Don't you miss them, the arguments? The struggle, always rubbing off someone else? The fights, the friction—?"

I laughed loudly. "Miss them to death," I said.

WE FINISHED THE BOTTLE OF WHITE, AND ORDERED a bottle of red; she said she preferred red with fish. I suspected that that was a concession to my entrecôte, which at any event was rare and bloody. She continued to press, gently at first, then with vehe-



mence. She was trying to work out her life and thought that somehow I was a clue to it. At last she demanded that I describe my days in Boston. She wanted to know how I lived, the details, "the quotidian." I was reluctant to do this, having lived privately for so many years. Also, there was very little to describe. I had fallen into the bachelor habit of total predictability. Except to travel to the airport and the courts, I seldom left the Back Bay. My terrain was bordered by the Public Garden and the Ritz, Storrow Drive, Newbury Street, the brownstone where I worked and Commonwealth Avenue where I lived. I walked to work, lunched at the Ritz, took a stroll in the Garden, returned to the brownstone, and at seven or so went home. People I knew tended to live in the Back Bay or on the Hill, so if I

went out in the evening I walked. Each year it became easier not to leave the apartment; I needed an exceptional reason to do so. I liked my work and worked hard at it.

She listened avidly, but did not comment. The waiter came to clear the table and offer dessert. We declined, ordering coffee and cognac.

"What kind of car do you have?" she asked suddenly.

I said I didn't own one.

"What kind of car does she own?"

I looked at her: Who?

"Your secretary," she said. "I hear you have a relationship with your secretary."

"She's been my assistant for a very long time," I said.

"Her car," Beth said.

I said, "A Mercedes."

"Well," she said.

"Well, what?"

"Well, nothing," she said. "Except so do I."

"Two cheers for the Krauts," I said.

"Is she a nice woman?"

I laughed. "Yes," I said. "Very. And very able."

"She approves of the arrangement."

"Beth," I said.

Beth said, "I wonder what she gets out of it?"

"She won't ever have to get divorced," I said. "That's one thing she gets out of it."

"Was she the woman in the outer office?"

"Probably," I said.

Beth was silent a moment, toying with her coffee cup. There was only one other couple left in the restaurant, and they were preparing to leave. "You were always secretive," she said.

"You were not exactly an open book."

She ignored that. "It's not an attractive trait, being secretive. It leaves you wide open."

For what? I wondered. I looked at her closely, uncertain whether it was she talking or the wine. We were both tight, but her voice had an edge that had not been there before. I poured more coffee, wondering whether I should ask the question that had been in my mind for the past hour. I knew I would not like the answer, whatever it was, but I was curious. Being with her again, I began to remember things I had not thought of in years; it was as if the two decades were no greater distance than the width of the table, and I had only to lean across the space and take her hand to be twenty-five again. The evening had already been very unsettling and strange; no reason, I thought, not to make it stranger still.

I said quietly, "How was I so bad?"

"You never let go," she said. "You just hung on for dear life."

"Right," I said. I had no idea what she was talking about.

"Our plans," she began.

"Depended on me letting go?"

She shrugged. "You tried to fit in and you never did."

"In Boston," I said.

She moved her head, yes and no; apparently the point was a subtle one. "I didn't want to come back here and you insisted. I was depending on you to take me away, or at least make an independent life. You never understood that I had always been on the outs with my family."

I stifled an urge to object. I had never wanted to come to Boston. It was where she lived. It was her town, not mine. Glorious Boston, cradle of the Revolution. I had no intrinsic interest in Boston, I only wanted to leave the Midwest. Boston was as good a city as any, and she lived there—

"You were such a damn good *listener*." She bit the word off, as if it were an obscenity. "Better than you are now, and you're pretty good now. Not so good at talking, though. You listened so well a woman forgot that you never talked yourself, never let on what it was *that was on your mind*. Not one of your strong points, talking."

"Beth," I said evenly. She waited, but I said nothing more; there was nothing more to say anyhow, and I knew the silence would irritate her.

"And it was obvious it would never work; we never got grounded here. And it was obvious you never would, you



IT TURNS OUT

It turns out you are the story of your childhood
and you're under constant revision,
like a lonely folktale whose invisible folks

are all the selves you've been, lifelong,
shadows in fog, gray glimmers at dusk.
And each of these selves had a childhood

it traded for love and grudged to give away,
now lost irretrievably, in storage
like a set of dishes from which no food,

no Cream of Wheat, no rabbit in mustard
sauce, nor even a single raspberry,
can be eaten until the afterlife,

which is only childhood in its last
disguise, all radiance or all humiliation,
and so it is forfeit a final time.

In fact it was awful, you think, or why
should the piecework of grief be endless?
Only because death is, and likewise loss,

which is not awful, but only breathtaking.
There's no truth about your childhood,
though there's a story, yours to tend,

like a fire or garden. Make it a good one,
since you'll have to live it out, and all
its revisions, so long as you all shall live,

for they shall be gathered to your deathbed,
and they'll have known to what you and they
would come, and this one time they'll weep for you.

—William Matthews

could never let go of your damned prairie *complexe d'infériorité*. And as a result you were"—she sought the correct word—"louche."

"I am not André Malraux," I said. "What the hell does that mean?"

"It means secretive," she said. "And something more. Furtive."

"Thanks," I said.

"It's a mystery to me why I'm still here. Not so great a mystery as you, but mystery enough. You had to lead the way, though, and you didn't. And I knew H,W was a mistake."

"It was your uncle who suggested it," I said.

"After you asked him," she said.

"At your urging," I said.

"When it looked like you wouldn't land anything and I was tired of the griping."

"You were the one who was nervous," I said.

"I didn't care where we lived," she said. "That was the point you never got." Her voice rose, and I saw the waiter turn and say something to the *maitre d'*. The other couple had left and we were alone in the restaurant. Outside, a police car sped by, its lights blazing, but without sirens. The officer in the passenger seat was white-haired and fat, and he was smoking a cigar. It had stopped snowing but the wind was fierce, blowing debris and rattling windows. The police car had disappeared. I motioned to the waiter for the check. But Beth was far from finished.

"So I married Doran."

"And I didn't marry anybody."

"You married Rachel."

"According to you, Rachel doesn't count."

"Neither did Doran."

The waiter brought the check and I automatically reached for my wallet. She said loudly, "No," and I looked at her, momentarily confused. I had forgotten it was her treat. I had become so absorbed in the past; always when we had been together, I had paid, and it seemed cheap of me to let her pay now. But that was what she wanted and I had agreed to it. She had the check in her hand and was inspecting it for errors. Then, satisfied, she pushed it aside along with a credit card. She exhaled softly and turned to look out the window.

She said quietly, talking to the window, "Do you think it will be easy?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Please," she said. She said it hesitantly, as if the word were unfamiliar. "Just tell me what you think. I won't hold you to it, if you're wrong."

"His lawyer," I began.

"Please," she said again, more forcefully.

"You're asking me for assurances that I can't give. I don't know."

"Just a guess," she said. "In your line of work you must make guesses all the time. Make one now, between us. Between friends."

"Well, then," I said. "No."

"The first one was easy."

"Maybe this will be too," I said.

"But you don't think so."

"No," I said. I knew Frank Greer.

She said, "You're a peach." She put on her glasses.

I did not reply to that.

"I mean it," she said.

Apparently she did, for she looked at me and smiled warmly.

"I have disrupted your life."

I shook my head, No.

"Yes, I have. That's what I do sometimes, disrupt the lives of men."

There was so much to say to that, and so little to be gained. I lit a cigarette, listening.

With a quick movement she pushed the half-glasses over her forehead and into her hair, all business. "Get in touch with him tomorrow. Can you do that?"

"Sure," I said.

"And let me know what he says, right away."

"Yes," I said.

"I don't think it's going to be so tough."

"I hope you're right," I said.

"But I've always been an optimist where men are concerned."

I smiled and touched her hand. I looked at her closely, remembering her as a young woman; I knew her now and I knew her then, but there was nothing in between. That was undiscovered territory. I saw the difficulties ahead. They were big as mountains, Annapurna-sized difficulties, a long slog at high altitudes, defending Beth. I took my hand away and said, "You can bail out any time you want, if this gets difficult or awkward. I know it isn't easy. I can put you in touch with any one of a dozen—" She stared at me for a long moment. In the candlelight her face seemed to flush. Suddenly I knew she was murderously angry.

"I think you're right," she said.

"Look," I began.

"Reluctant lawyers are worse than useless." She took off her glasses and put them in her purse. When she snapped the purse shut it sounded like a pistol shot.

"I'll call you tomorrow," I said. I knew that I had handled it badly, but there was no retreat now.

She stood up and the waiter swung into position, helping her with her chair and bowing prettily from the waist.

OUTSIDE ON BOYLSTON STREET THE WIND WAS still blowing, and the street was empty except for two cabs at the curb. We stood a moment on the sidewalk, not speaking. She stood with her head turned away, and I thought for a moment she was crying. But when she turned her head I saw the set of her jaw. She was too angry to cry. She began to walk up the street, and I followed. The wind off the Atlantic was vicious. I thought

of it as originating in Scotland or Scandinavia, but of course that was wrong. Didn't the wind blow from west to east? This one probably originated in the upper Midwest or Canada. It had a prairie feel to it. We both walked unsteadily with our heads tucked into our coat collars. I thought of Tom and his camel's-hair coat. At Arlington Street she stopped and fumbled for her keys, and then resumed the march. A beggar was at our heels, asking for money. I turned, apprehensive, but he was a sweet-faced drunk. I gave him a dollar and he ambled off. Her car was parked across the street from the Ritz, a green Mercedes convertible with her initials in gold on the door. The car gleamed in the harsh white light of the streetlamps. She stooped to unlock the door, and when she opened it the smell of leather, warm and inviting, spilled into the frigid street. I held the door for her, but she did not get in. She stood looking at me, her face expressionless. She started to say something, but changed her mind. She threw her purse into the back seat and the next thing I knew I was reeling backward, then slipping on an icy patch and falling. Her fist had come out of nowhere and caught me under the right eye. Sprawled on the sidewalk, speechless, I watched her get into the car and drive away. The smell of leather remained in my vicinity.

The doorman at the Ritz had seen all of it, and now he hurried across Arlington Street. He helped me up, muttering and fussing, but despite his best intentions he could not help smiling. He kept his face half turned away so I would not see. Of course he knew me; I was a regular in the bar and the café.

Damn woman, I said. She could go ten with Marvin Hagler.

He thought it all right then to laugh.

Not like the old days, I said.

Packed quite a punch, did she, sir? Ha-ha.

I leaned against the iron fence and collected my wits.

Anything broken? he asked.

I didn't think so. I moved my legs and arms, touched my eye. It was tender but there was no blood. I knew I would have a shiner and wondered how I would explain that at the office.

Let's get you into the bar, he said. A brandy—

No. I shook my head painfully and reached for my wallet. The doorman waited, his face slightly averted as before. I found a five, then thought better of it and gave him a twenty. He didn't have to be told that twenty dollars bought silence. He tucked the money away in his vest and tipped his hat, frowning solicitously.

You wait here one minute, he said. I'll fetch a cab.

No need, I replied. Prefer to walk. I live nearby.

I know, he said, looking at me doubtfully. Then, noticing he had customers under the hotel canopy, he hurried back across the street. I watched him go, assuring the people

with a casual wave of his hand that the disturbance was a private matter, minor and entirely under control.

I moved away too, conscious of being watched and realizing that I was very tight. I was breathing hard and could smell my cognac breath. I felt my eye beginning to puff and I knew that I would have bruises on my backside. I decided to take a long way home and walked through the iron gate into the Garden. There was no one about, but the place was filthy, papers blowing everywhere and ash cans stuffed to overflowing. The flurries had left a residue of gray snow. I passed a potato-faced George Washington on horseback on my way along the path to the statue facing Marlborough Street. This was my favorite. Atop the column a physician cradled an unconscious patient, "to commemorate the discovery that the inhaling of ether causes insensibility to pain. First proved to the world at the Mass. General Hospital." It was a pretty little Victorian sculpture. On the plinth someone had scrawled *Up the I.R.A.* in red paint.

I exited at the Beacon Street side. A cab paused, but I waved him on. I labored painfully down Beacon to Clarendon and over to Commonwealth, my shoes scuffing little shards of blue glass, hard and bright as diamonds; this was window glass from the automobiles vandalized nightly. While I waited at the light a large American sedan pulled up next to me, its fender grazing my leg, two men and a woman staring menacingly out the side windows. I took a step backward, and the sedan sped through the red light, trailing rock music and laughter. Tires squealed as the car accelerated, wheeling right on Newbury.

My flat was only a few blocks away. I walked down the deserted mall, my eyes up and watchful. Leafless trees leaned over the walkway, their twisted branches grotesque against the night sky. I walked carefully, for there was ice and dog shit everywhere. The old-fashioned streetlights, truly handsome in daytime, were useless now. It was all so familiar; I had walked down this mall every day for twenty years. Twenty years ago, when there was no danger after dark, Rachel and I took long strolls on summer evenings trying to reach an understanding, and failing. I remembered her musical voice and her accent; when she was distressed she spoke rapidly, but always with perfect diction. I looked up, searching for my living-room window. I was light-headed now and stumbling, but I knew I was close. The Hancock was to my left, as big as a mountain and as sheer, looming like some futuristic religious icon over the low, crabbed sprawl of the Back Bay. I leaned against a tree, out of breath. There was only a little way now; I could see the light in the window. My right eye was almost closed, and my vision blurred. The wind bit into my face, sending huge tears running down my cheeks. I hunched my shoulders against the wind and struggled on, through the empty streets of the city I hated so. □

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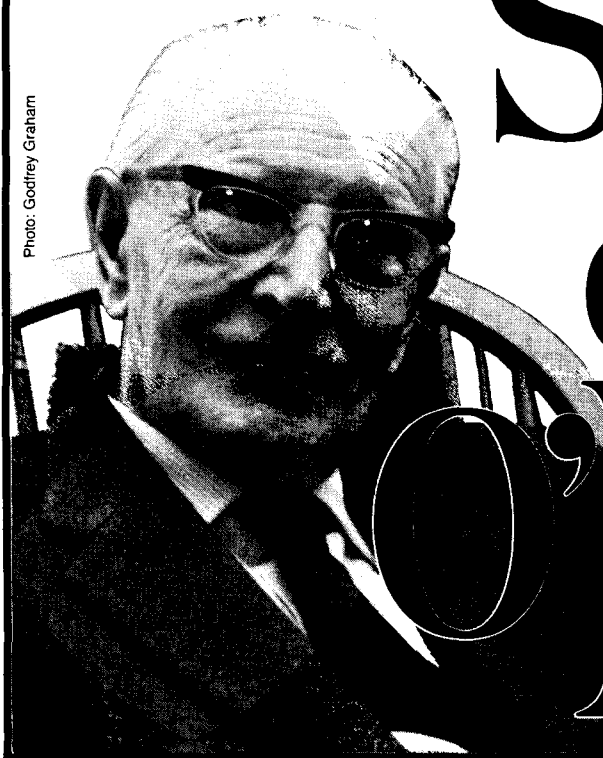
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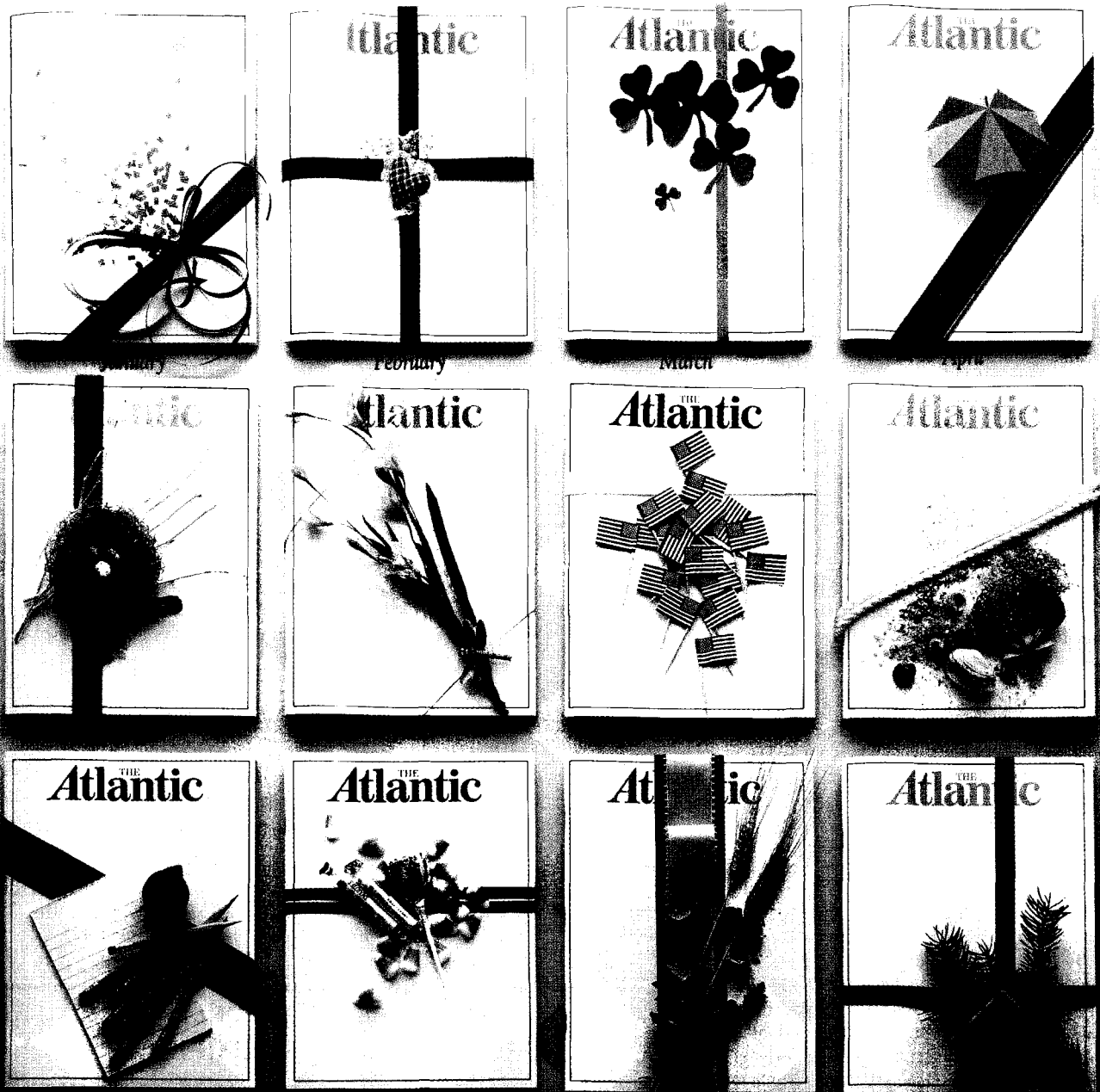
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UNEASY RESTS HEAD UNDER SANTA HAT

BY ROY BLOUNT, JR.



LAST CHRISTMAS SOMEONE asked if I would play Santa Claus for his children and their friends. Actually dress up in a full Santa suit that he would rent.

I said no.

He was taken aback. He couldn't understand why I would pass up such a heartwarming opportunity. Kids regarding me with eyes of wonder. Eyes of "Wonder who put this total donut-hole up to this" is more like it, I said.

I remembered how my friend Dupree Culp felt when he portrayed Santa back in college, at a party our fraternity gave for local orphans. We needed a community-service credit to offset what happened when one of the brothers, Brince Ealey, regained consciousness unexpectedly one Sunday morning in the shrubbery outside Grace Boulevard Methodist Church. Unable to place himself at all, Brince perceived a world blotted out by a mass of tiny leaves except for a series of pastel-colored high-heeled shoes, which were crunching in the pea-gravel walkway past his face. In a kind of paroxysm, he ruined a lot of hedge, tore off one whole leg of his Bermuda shorts, and upended three prominent Methodist women.

This is by no means characteristic of Brince Ealey today. He is a congressman and outspoken foe of governmental action, who recently—after his eight-year-old daughter came home from school with the idea that Latin American people don't believe in Uncle Sam—proposed that "reinforcement of American belief" be mandated through twelfth grade at least.

Dupree Culp had always associated Santa with the triggering of innocent ecstasy. In his childhood—thanks to his mother, who had been orphaned, first by an oil stove and then by a locomotive, just before the Depression—Christmas morning was something precisely commensurate with his capacity for wonder. "Even when I didn't get the Erector Set I asked for one year," he told me, "I fig-

ured if I didn't get it, I must not have really wanted it."

Dupree said his mother often told him that she treasured nothing in this world the way she treasured seeing the expression on his face every Christmas morning when he saw what lay under the tree. *Plenty*. From out of the blue.

And Dupree said he didn't feel obliged to have a certain expression, either. He had it naturally. Every year, his mother would suggest how good of him it would be if he'd set aside one of his presents to give to some poor child through the church, and he always agreed and felt good about the idea, but she never actually made him do it.

So Dupree jumped at playing Santa Claus. The first jarring note came as he got into his suit. I was watching him. Everything in the costume worked except the hat.

WE TAKE A GREAT many things for granted in this country, until we find ourselves responsible for bringing them off. Santa Claus's hat is a good example. Dupree wore his hair short, as was the fashion in 1961, and the hat wouldn't sit up on his head. It flopped down over his eyes and onto his chin. The pompon bounced around on his face when he walked or tried a "Ho-ho-ho."

When he moved the pompon to the back, the hat looked like a red skullcap. When he draped the pompon to one side, he appeared to be wearing the headdress of a fey Turkish pirate. Dupree was upset. He wanted to be convincing. At my suggestion, he gave the hat some body by stuffing it with cotton. "It looks like a sundae," he complained. But after we pinned more cotton around the edges to represent snowy hair, the effect was pretty good. The hat-hair ensemble tended to stay in one place, which meant it changed position relative to his head when he made sudden movements, but he said he wouldn't make any more sudden movements.

The doorbell rang, heralding the orphans. Dupree took his bag of gifts and



crawled composedly up into the chimney.

Actually, there was no chimney. We had a false fireplace in the fraternity house. But it was a big one, and for some reason it extended upward, above the level of the mantle, into a dark pocket somewhat larger than Dupree. He climbed into this hidden space, with his bag on his shoulder, and hung there, completely out of sight.

In the entrance hall, the orphans were given lime sherbet melting in ginger ale. Then they were ushered into the large common room where the fireplace was. The orphans milled about. They sipped or spilled their punch. They looked around. Dupree was building suspense.

There was a soft plop. The orphans turned, as one orphan, toward the fireplace. There, like a small, dead, red-and-white animal on a white nest, sat Dupree's hat and snowy hair. Dupree explained later that he had felt deep in his ear something trying to fly. "It didn't seem to want to come out," he said. "It seemed to want to get further in." For the orphans' sake, Dupree had hung there stoically. But he had tried to nudge his ear with his shoulder, and in so doing had dislodged his headpiece. When the orphans saw it fall, they flocked to the hearth and peered up at him.

Dupree hung there, jouncing his head awkwardly and trying to think. The orphans said things like "Right. Sure." He had lost the element of surprise.

There was no turning back. Dupree dropped into the children's midst, reclaimed his hat and hair from one of

them, jumped up and down on one foot like someone with water on the ear, and put his hat and hair back on. "Ho-ho-ho," he said.

There is nothing quite so flat as a "Ho-ho-ho" that has a distracted and also a resigned quality. By this time, the moth or whatever it was had left, but you know how you feel when something strange has just been in your ear. Dupree focused on the children's faces, but their expressions were not what he had had in mind.

Perhaps he should have shown what today's trend-setters call "attitude," and said, "Okay. We all know there is no Santa Claus." But what if one of the orphans had *not* known? How would that child have felt, finding out from Santa Claus himself?

As Dupree handed out presents, one of the orphans slipped past him to look up into the fireplace again. Dupree grabbed at him, but he got by.

"Hey," the orphan said. "No hole in the top. How'd you get *in*? Hunh?" His "Hunh?" was hearty.

Then Brince Ealey woke up under a big sofa across the room and began sneezing and throwing up through his nose simultaneously, a terrible sound. As the children moved in that direction, Dupree took his empty bag and left.

He declined the role of Father Christmas the following year. That was when the orphans, having had four parties already that week and being due at another one in less than an hour, forced their way into the room where Santa—Brince Ealey—was getting into his suit.

The orphans found Brince in his beard, his red pants, and a fuzzy blue cardigan sweater. Most people in that situation would have felt like Venus observed while trying to find something under a chest of drawers, but in those days Brince could go with nearly anything, as long as, frankly, he hadn't passed out yet. Brince yelled "Christmas is over! Easter time!" and led the orphans down to the kitchen, where they broke five dozen eggs. It was not until the fourth semester of his junior year that Brince did a complete 180: stopped raising hell, became a straight arrow, and ran for Honor Council.

Dupree felt strongly that Brince, in his partying days, was the wrong person to be Santa Claus. "I'm probably responsible," he said, "for letting the orphans' party fall off to the point where it would

even occur to anyone that Brince Ealey should play Santa."

"But you meant well," I told him. "You could have just strolled in through the door and been cool. You got in the chimney because you wanted to suspend disbelief."

"My mother *did* suspend it," he said. He's career-Army now, intelligence. The last time I saw him, he couldn't tell me what he was doing, except that he was authorized to carry a pistol on commercial flights.

Let's face it. In any period of history, being Santa Claus requires craft, timing, good breaks, and a specially constructed hat. Nobody wants a clown for a benefactor. (These days, nobody wants a benefactor at all. Everyone wants to feel that whatever he has he took.) Santa must be generosity personified, but also self-preserving. A fine line there.

Particularly today! Contemporary American children, if they are old enough to grasp the concept of Santa Claus by Thanksgiving, are able to see through it by December 15. In the movie *Trading Places*, which has found favor with the make-or-break youth audience, Dan Aykroyd eats a stolen smoked salmon through the beard of his Santa costume, on the bus, drunk. Beard and fish become horribly entwined. When I saw that scene, a child sitting near me exclaimed, "Ewwwww, yuck!" Her eyes were shining.

However, I don't think we need to assume that the death of innocence is set in concrete. Things change. Brince Ealey changed. His daddy made him. □

MUSIC

ATONAL CLARITY

BY WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN



THE REJECTION OF tonality by virtually all of this century's serious composers has brought with it unforeseen difficulties. Though often compared to the rejection of representation by twentieth-century painters, and to the rejection of traditional linear narrative form by many twentieth-century novelists, the rejection of tonality has in fact turned out to be quite different—to con-

stitute a far more radical threat to artistic expressiveness and even to intelligibility. For though a painting can be seen all at once, and a novel can be taken in at the reader's own pace—with as many pauses, as many references back and forth through the text, as he deems necessary—a piece of music, heard in performance, is a cumulative, temporal process over which the listener has no control. Along the way, there must be enough clear signposts to enable him to organize the piece, to realize its shape and significance, as he listens. For centuries, tonality provided these signposts. Later substitutes, the most famous of which is Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, have generally failed to do so, turning out instead to be merely private means of achieving organization, of use to the composer and perhaps to the analyst, but not to the listener. We have successfully extended our ways of seeing to accommodate the great nonrepresentational paintings of the twentieth century, and our modes of verbal apprehension to accommodate novels as untraditional as those of Joyce and Beckett, but our ways of hearing, and of organizing what we hear as we hear it, have remained stubbornly rooted in tonality.

Of all post-Schoenbergian composers, perhaps the one who has managed most successfully to write in a nontonal idiom while still giving his listeners the means to organize his music as form evolving in sound is the American Elliott Carter, who this month celebrates his seventy-fifth birthday. This year has been marked by a number of important recordings of his works, as well as by the publication in this country of David Schiff's *The Music of Elliott Carter* (Da Capo Press, \$39.50). Though Schiff's book is highly (and unavoidably) technical, it should be read by anyone with an interest in twentieth-century music, as should two other books in which Carter, an extremely articulate man, gives his view of the contemporary musical scene and talks about what he has tried to accomplish: *The Writings of Elliott Carter* (Indiana University Press, 1977) and Allen Edwards's *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter* (Norton, 1971).

During the late 1930s and the early 1940s, Carter, like many American composers, was writing in a self-consciously

William H. Youngren teaches English at Boston College.

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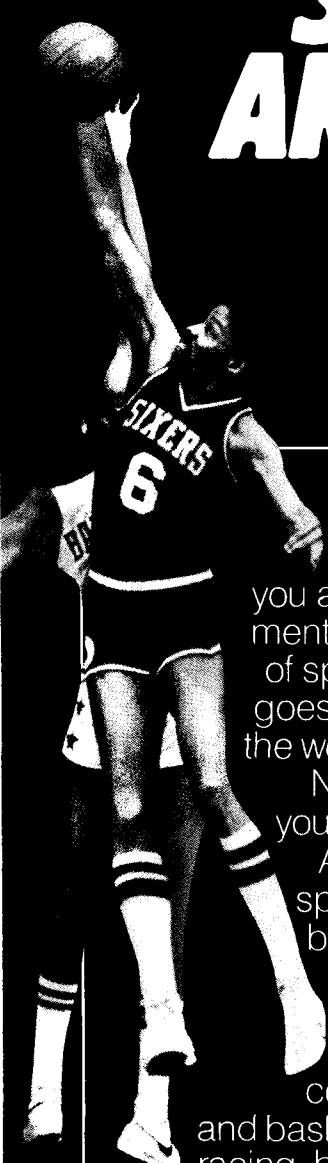
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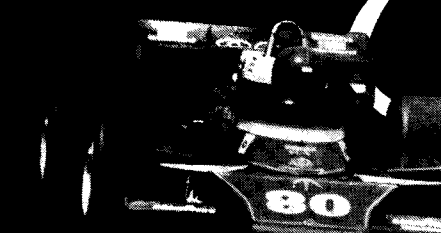


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"populist" idiom, more or less tonally and with hints of jazz and folk influence. One of the recently issued records, Composers Recordings SD 475, contains the Suite from the ballet *Pocahontas* (1939, revised 1961), the Symphony No. 1 (1942), and the *Holiday Overture* (1944), well played by the American Composers Orchestra, conducted by Paul Dunkel. All three are delightful and accessible, but they give no hint—except with the most strenuously exerted hindsight—of the works to come. (The Suite from the 1947 ballet *The Minotaur* belongs with these early works; a 1956 performance by Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra has been reissued on Mercury Golden Imports SRI 75111.)

Carter's first mature work, the Piano Sonata, of 1946, is in another world altogether. Though suggestive of Aaron Copland (and also of Debussy), it goes far beyond Copland in density and emotional power. Among the new Carter recordings are two superb performances of the Sonata, which are, moreover, different from each other in a way that helps the listener get a grasp of the work. On Nonesuch 79047-1, Paul Jacobs plays it spaciouly and quite romantically, while on Etcetera ETC 1008 Charles Rosen gives it a stricter and more classical reading.

IT WAS IN composing the Piano Sonata, Carter told Allen Edwards, that he first became "interested in pursuing the possibilities of dramatic contrast and interplay offered by the individual character of instruments." Carter explored these possibilities further in four works for instrumental groups of increasing diversity: the Sonata for Cello and Piano (1948); the String Quartet No. 1 (1951); the Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord (1952); and the Variations for Orchestra (1953–1955). The Cello Sonata and the Quartet, powerful works clearly related to the Piano Sonata in conception, are both available, excellently performed by Joel Krosnick and Paul Jacobs (Nonesuch 71234) and by the Composers Quartet (Nonesuch 71249), respectively. The witty and ebullient Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord is available in no less than four recorded versions—the most accorded any Carter work. The best of these, because the freest and most pliant, is the one by New England Conservatory musicians, on Golden Crest NEC 109; almost as

good is the one coupled with the Krosnick–Jacobs performance of the Cello Sonata, on Nonesuch 71234. The Variations for Orchestra, which I find a less successful work, is not available just now; Columbia MS-7191, which contains a performance by Frederik Prausnitz and the New Philharmonia Orchestra, is worth searching for.

After the Variations, Carter completed no new works for four years. Over the two decades that followed, he produced some fine chamber pieces: the String Quartet No. 2 (1959), performed by the Composers Quartet on Nonesuch 71249, and by the Juilliard Quartet on Columbia M-32738; the String Quartet No. 3 (1971), also performed by the Juilliard on

Victor LM-3001, in a recording pieced together from the work's premiere performances, in January, 1967, by Jacob Lateiner and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. The resulting performance was unsatisfactory, often sluggish and incoherent, but at least it was something; now there is nothing. The absence of this great work from the catalogue leaves a gaping hole in the Carter discography. A satisfactory 1970 performance of the Concerto for Orchestra, by Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, has recently been reissued on Composers Recordings SD 469; a far more elegant and cohesive 1975 broadcast performance by Pierre Boulez and the same orchestra



Columbia M-32738; and the Duo for Violin and Piano (1974), performed by Paul Zukofsky and Gilbert Kalish on Nonesuch 71314. But the great triumphs of these later years are the works that involve full orchestra, for which Carter had learned to write with greater flexibility and expressive clarity than he had shown in the Variations. These include the Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano (1961), the Piano Concerto (1965), the Concerto for Orchestra (1969), and *A Symphony of Three Orchestras* (1976).

The Double Concerto is performed with great verve and precision by Paul Jacobs (harpsichord) and Gilbert Kalish (piano), with the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, conducted by Arthur Weisberg, on Nonesuch 71314. The Piano Concerto was once available on RCA

makes one hope that Boulez will soon record it. Boulez's superb performance of *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*, also with the New York Philharmonic (recently issued on CBS M-35171), reinforces that hope.

In recent years, Carter has returned to writing vocal music, which he had not done since the 1940s. *A Mirror on Which to Dwell*, his 1975 settings of poems by Elizabeth Bishop, for soprano and chamber orchestra, is performed by Susan Davenney Wyner and the Speculum Musicae ensemble, conducted by Richard Fitz, on CBS M-35171; *Syringa* (1978), set to John Ashbery's poem of that title and also to various ancient Greek fragments, is performed on Composers Recordings SD 469 by Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano, and Thomas Paul, baritone, with the Speculum Musicae and

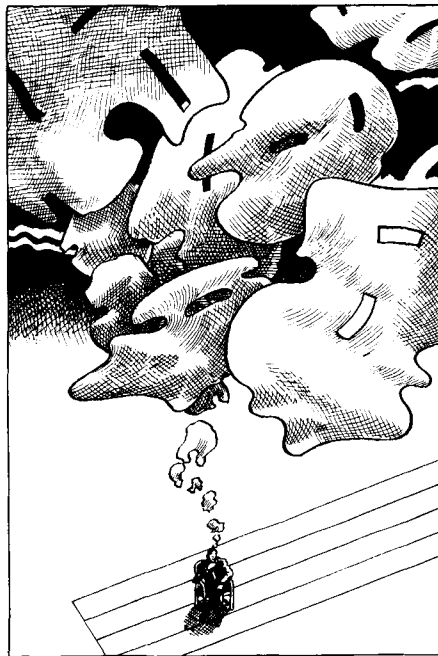
the Group for Contemporary Music, conducted by Harvey Sollberger.

Finally, there is *Night Fantasies* (1980), Carter's first piece for solo piano—in fact, for any single instrument—since the Piano Sonata. The Piano Sonata was the first work in which he began to explore consciously those possibilities for contrast and interplay that he mentioned to Edwards; in *Night Fantasies* Carter has come full circle, returning at last to the solo piano, denying himself the opportunities offered by contrasting instrumental voices and attempting to integrate the results of his years of experimentation into his writing for a single instrument. It is thus appropriate that Paul Jacobs's and Charles Rosen's performances of *Night Fantasies* are on the reverse sides of their performances of the Sonata (Nonesuch 79047-1 and Etcetera ETC 1008, respectively). While their performances of the Sonata are equally fine, though quite different, Rosen's *Night Fantasies* seems clearly superior to Jacobs's. An expansive, meditative work, *Night Fantasies* benefits from Rosen's crisply dramatic articulation; it is easier to lose one's way in Jacobs's performance, beautifully expressive though it is.

With *Night Fantasies*, the view of Carter's compositional career available to us through records, like the account of it given in Schiff's book, ends—but probably not for long. A new chamber work, the Triple Duo, and *In Sleep, In Thunder*, a setting of Robert Lowell poems, have had their premieres; Carter has done a piece for the guitarist David Starobin and is composing a chamber work for Boulez's IRCAM in Paris.

WHAT MAKES ELLIOTT Carter so special? Why does he stand out so sharply among twentieth-century composers? Why does his work give such abundant and ever-deepening pleasure, even to those of us who find the latter half of our century relatively poor in important serious music? Carter's music is certainly not easy; from the Piano Sonata on, it is mostly quite difficult. But while he has often commented wryly, even bitterly, on the practical difficulties faced by a serious composer in the twentieth century, he has never adopted the familiar stance of the alienated artist, the man who makes his music difficult in order to shock or enrage, in order to gain revenge on a public assumed to be already hostile. Indeed, Carter has always

insisted firmly on the listener's right to intelligibility. "I try to write music that will appeal to an intelligent listener's ear and will be a strong enough expression so that the listener will be drawn to hear and grasp this music when it is presented by a performer who finds it gratifying enough to play effectively," he told Edwards. And Carter never talks, in the manner made fashionable by Schoenberg, about the difficulty of twentieth-century music as an inevitable consequence of history, of the operation of the "laws of music." One finally has to say that Carter's music is difficult simply because he hears it that way in his mind and can transmit it to us in no other form.



Why, then, does so much of it seem immediately attractive, interesting, and at least partially accessible, in spite of its difficulty, its plethora of bewilderingly complex details? Mainly, I think, because of its extraordinary gestural clarity, because of the dramatic sense and urgently important substance communicated by, for example, the thrilling trumpet solo at the beginning of *A Symphony of Three Orchestras*, or the recitative-like cello pronouncements that punctuate the Concerto for Orchestra, or the slow build to the confrontation between piano and orchestra in the Piano Concerto. In a 1960 article, Carter spoke of his conception of each of his works as "a large, unified musical action or gesture." He continued, "I am always interested in a composer's phrases and their shape and

content, the way he joins them, the type of articulation he uses, as well as the general drift or continuity of a large section, and the construction of a whole work. The small details of harmony, rhythm, and texture fall naturally into place when one has interesting conceptions of these larger shapes."

Carter's overriding concern with large dramatic gestures and shapes has led him to eschew the twelve-tone method and all other quasi-mechanical modes of musical organization. He wrote in 1959 that postwar European twelve-tone music "seems to have become occupied with pattern alone, hoping somehow that interest and meaning would emerge. . . . This ordering according to the random application of number systems seems wasteful because it produces so many useless possibilities, like the monkeys at typewriters." And in his conversations with Edwards, Carter drew a sharp contrast between the twelve-tone method and other, similar systems on the one hand, and tonality on the other:

. . . these systems are perfectly fine as abstract schemata of one kind or another, but are often useless for musical purposes, simply because they don't have any particular relation to the composer's desire to communicate feelings and thoughts of many different kinds, which . . . are logically prior to the evolution of any system. This lack of relation to the composer's desire to communicate goes together with the fact that these systems lack any relation to the listener's psychology of musical hearing. The so-called "system" of tonal harmony was obviously not invented as a mechanically or arithmetically perfect system on paper—it was invented by constant musical experiment over many years by composers attempting to communicate something to intelligent listeners.

Carter has also devoted a great deal of attention to rhythm, recognizing that temporal process, as communicated through rhythm, is basic to our experience of music. "Any technical or esthetic consideration of music," he told Edwards, "really must start with the matter of time." Instead of the rhythmic deadness of so much of the music written according to the twelve-tone method and other "systems"—what Carter once called its "static repetitiveness" and "squared-off articulation"—we find in his mature works an increasing preoccu-

pation with the creation of a complex overlay of contrasting and constantly varying pulses. The resulting rhythmic vitality is another immediately attractive and inviting characteristic of his music.

As for the other elements of music, harmony plays a far larger role in Carter's works than one might at first suspect. Though his harmony is not tonally centered, tonal implications are so often present that the listener is able to follow the evolving harmonic rhythm. (A good, relatively simple example is the ravishingly beautiful second movement of the String Quartet No. 1.) Perhaps the most valuable feature of Schiff's excellent book is his painstaking analysis of the harmonic basis of Carter's music. Carter has often declared that he is not interested in sound for its own sake, yet he has created, and made wonderfully expressive, a battery of new and original sounds: the astonishing harpsichord sonorities in the Sonata and the Double Concerto, the highly subdivided strings in the Piano Concerto, the enormous variety and range of percussion in all the later orchestral works—these are but a few examples. Though there are significant motivic statements in Carter's mature works, there is almost nothing that could be called melody; yet his skillful and deeply personal interweaving of the other musical elements more than compensates for this willed lack.

The difficulty of Carter's music, like that of much other twentieth-century music, has often been chalked up to the fact that we live in a difficult age, a world troubled and confused by social and spiritual unrest, existing in the ever-present shadow of atomic holocaust. But this is nonsense. Carter's main influences, as one can see clearly from his writings and as Schiff has convincingly shown, are literary. Letting his mind and ear range freely over the literature of the past and the present that has meant most to him, Carter has triumphantly extended the expressive possibilities of nontonal music beyond that familiar (and rather dreary) emotional terrain controlled by the forces of angst, horror, nightmare, and depression. He has created a world of his own, in which wit, irony, pathos, and heroism freely interact as they do in the music of the greatest pre-twentieth-century masters. It is this achievement that gives Elliott Carter, alone among composers of our time, his right to the title of master. □

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BOOKS

JOURNEY TO OTHER SITES

BY IRVING HOWE

IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL

by Amos Oz. Translated by Maurie Goldberg-Bartura.
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$12.95.

NATIONS WHOSE BIRTH dates can be cited exactly—1776, 1948—tend to be self-conscious. They feel a need to justify their existence, they try to locate their distinctive character. In the United States the early effort at self-definition came to a climax with the Civil War. In Israel that effort is proceeding tumultuously—in fact, has split the country into bitterly contending camps.

This Israeli split may seem, at first, mainly political: doves hoping for compromise with Arabs versus hawks trusting only the authority of guns. But crisscrossing this dispute are others, less sharply defined because they cut more deeply into cultural styles and values. The secularists confront the religious. Ashkenazic Jews (from Europe) are hard pressed by Sephardic (from Africa and the Middle East). Labor Zionists, whose secular outlook and social-democratic politics dominated the country in its formative years, are being steadily displaced by religious traditionalists and fervent nationalists. For some Israelis, this represents a retreat from European culture toward "Levantine" ways. But however defined, these battles for the future of the country—impassioned, con-

fused, interlocking—trouble just about everyone who wants to see Israel survive as a country at once Jewish and democratic.

Some such jumble of problems must have been haunting Amos Oz, the talented Israeli novelist, when he set out last year to interview a variety of Israelis for the Labor newspaper *Davar*. Oz didn't pay much attention to his own side—the doves, the *kibbutzniks*, the intellectuals. He sought out, instead, those Israelis who have in recent years rebelled against the Labor Zionist institutions and traditions out of which the state of Israel was formed.

Oz's interviews, now published in a lively English translation, *In the Land of Israel*, caused a sensation when they first came out in *Davar*. Here, unadorned and brutal, are the voices of messianic nationalists; here, rough but vivid, are the voices of the Oriental Jews, still smarting from humiliations they remember having suffered from the Ashkenazic Labor establishment.

Oz plunged right in. He went to the religious sects in Jerusalem; to the Moroccan Jews in the town of Bet Shemesh; to the West Bank settlers. He talked to a fire-eating Mr. Z., whose opinions graze fascism; he argued with an Arab Communist who, somehow, identifies himself

as an Israeli; he listened to an old Jewish farmer who feels the country is going to the dogs because not many Jews are still eager to work the land.

In the Land of Israel is a vivid, tense, somewhat garish social portrait. The voices that come spiraling out of its pages . . . let's listen for a minute or two.

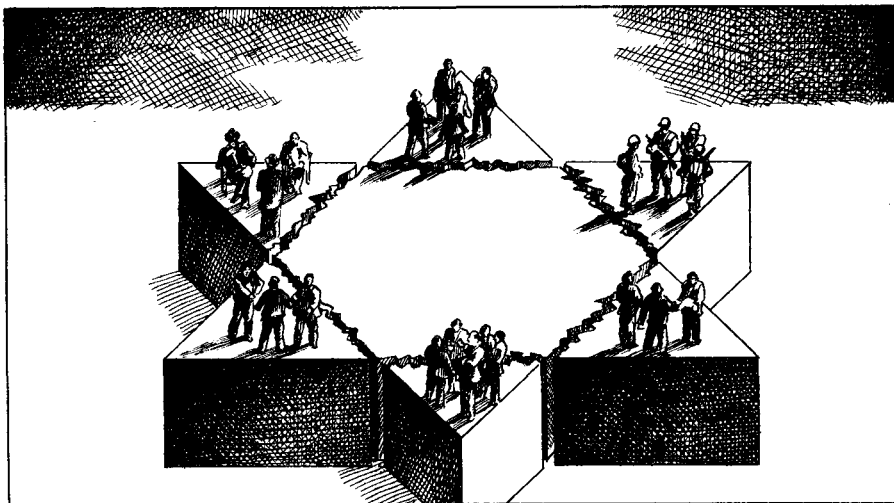
Mr. Z., a brawny, prosperous farmer, believes in an "iron-clad law" that "throughout history, anyone who thought he was above killing got killed." He talks calmly, in a ribbon of monologue. No, he doesn't mind being compared to Qaddafi, or even being called a "Judeo-Nazi." For he isn't "looking to the gentiles for admiration," nor, he jabs at Oz, to "your kind of Jew, either." What he wants is that the world "fear me instead of feeling sorry for me."

It's power the Jews need, and Mr. Z. isn't fastidious about its uses. He regrets that the "mini-massacre" in the Palestinian camps of Lebanon was done by Christian Phalangists rather than by "us, with our delicate little hands!" We have to give the *goyim*—Arabs, Europeans, whoever—so many blows that finally, once and for all, they let us live in peace. And if that means doing some ugly things for a while, "what's so terrible about being a civilized people . . . with a slight criminal past? It happens in the best of families."

Oz suggests to Mr. Z. that Hitler not only killed Jews but also infected some of them with his poison. Mr. Z. isn't upset by this thought. Better, he implies, to inhale a bit of Hitler's poison and survive than to go up in smoke at Auschwitz with the sainted rabbis. "I'll wipe out the Arab villages," he tells Oz, "and you can hold protest demonstrations. . . . You'll be the family's honor and I'll be the stain on the family's honor. . . . Is it a deal?"

Oz journeys to the town of Bet Shemesh, where he talks with Moroccan Jews. They buy him drinks, insist that he write their words down accurately, and shower him with furious complaints: You Ashkenazic Jews, you "whites," treated us like dirt when we first came here, in the 1950s. You thought you had to uproot our values, delouse us culturally, and remake us in your exalted image. Yes, the Labor government "gave us houses," but it also "gave us the dirty work." Yes, "they gave us education, and they took away our self-respect. . . . You brought our parents to be your

Irving Howe is the author of *World of Our Fathers* and other books.



Arabs," says one of the Bet Shemesh people.

But now I'm a supervisor. And he's a contractor, self-employed. And that guy there has a transport business. Also self-employed. Small-scale . . . but so what? If they give back the territories, the Arabs will stop coming to work, and then and there you'll put us back into the dead-end jobs, like before. If for no other reason, we won't let you give back those territories. . . . Look at my daughter: she works in a bank now, and every evening an Arab comes to clean the building. All you want is to dump her from the bank into some textile factory, or have her wash the floors instead of the Arab. The way my mother used to clean for you. That's why we hate you here. As long as Begin's in power, my daughter's secure at the bank. If you guys come back, you'll pull her down first thing.

It's remarkable: these people complain less about material hardship or social inequity than about the loss of dignity. Perhaps, somehow, they've been infected with the values held by the very portion of Israel they're attacking? In any case, they tell Oz, Begin is their "father," for he, Polish Jew though he may be, has given them an honored place in Israeli life—for the first time.

They keep shouting at Oz, pouring out their sense of humiliation yet also betraying a certain respect for him ("Write it in good Hebrew"). Passions spent, they ask him, almost good-naturedly, "Would you like a Coke? All this shouting hasn't made you thirsty?"

Oz drives over to Tekoa, a West Bank settlement, where in dingy prefabs live followers of Gush Emunim, the increasingly powerful movement that blends nationalism and religion, with selected passages from the Bible, to justify permanent Israeli rule over the West Bank and its Arab population. He converses with Menachem, an Israeli, and Harriet, his American-born wife. They burn with righteousness. They are fighting "a holy war" on the West Bank "against all of Islam!" Harriet, like many of the American Jews who have settled on the West Bank, is even more fanatical than her husband: "Maybe we should let somebody like Arik Sharon wipe out as many of them as possible . . . until the Arabs realize that we did them a favor by letting them stay alive at all."

Oz asks Harriet: "And [will the Arabs]

do the dirty work for us?" Harriet doesn't flinch: "Why not? . . . Isn't that the way it is in the Bible? Weren't there hewers of wood and carriers of water?"

A saving word of humaneness comes from Menachem's assistant, Danny, a quiet boy, who says about the Arabs:

I know what *not* to do: not to kill them, not to throw them out, not to oppress them. But what should be done, I don't know yet. But I keep thinking about it. A lot.

Shift the scene now to Geulah, an Orthodox quarter of Jerusalem. It's another world, as if Zionism had never touched the place and the Jews were still back in some Polish *shtetl*. People speak Yiddish, wear Hasidic caftans, despise all Zionist governments, past and present. Oz engages with a yeshiva instructor, asking him whether his school observes Israeli Independence Day.

. . . what's to celebrate? Nu, has the Messiah come? . . . the State you made for yourselves [his voice drops to a near whisper]—just between you and me—why, even you are already sick of it. . . . What's to celebrate here? . . . That we've become like the goyim?

Geulah is obsessed by two eternal presences, Hitler and the Messiah, evil and righteousness, struggling for lordship of the world. "Only Hitler," adds Oz, "is alive and well." But the Messiah—"He doth tarry." And until he comes "there is a short intermission . . . to be used for gathering strength and power, even if it is only with Zionist subsidies." That last clause is a neat thrust: after all, Oz is human, too.

IN THE LAND of Israel sets one's mind reeling with speculations and anxieties. A fascistic type like Mr. Z. is exceptional, no doubt; but part of his thought, if little of his cleverness, can also be found in influential Israeli figures like Arik Sharon and the Israeli Army's ex-chief of staff Raphael Eitan. The racist blather of Harriet is cruder than anything most Israeli settlers on the West Bank would permit themselves, but she is far from alone in her contempt for the Arabs or her persuasion that oppressing them is sanctioned by the Bible. In any case, Bible or no Bible, is it not in the nature of things that occupiers should regard as "inferior" the people whose lands they occupy? And that fanatics convinced their worldly goals bear a holy

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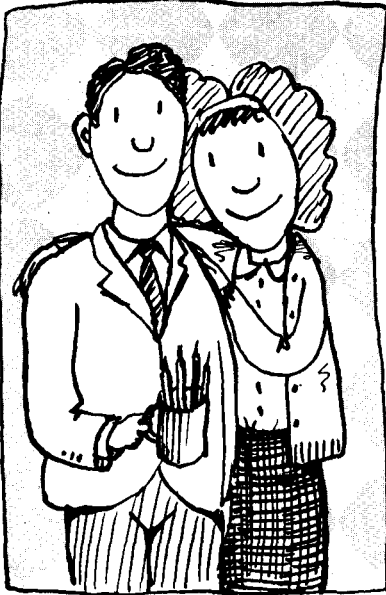
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stamp should care little about those who stand in their way?

Israel is undergoing profound and alarming changes of mood and outlook. A good half of its population—only yesterday victimized in Arab countries of North Africa and the Middle East—has emerged from cultures that were never ventilated by the breezes of the liberal Enlightenment. These people did not experience directly the bracing spirit of early Zionism; they have known only the later years of bureaucratic rigidity and moral confusion. For this they are not, of course, to be blamed; nevertheless, the result is a severe break in the inner life of Israeli society and culture.

There has also occurred during the past fifteen or so years a hardening of spirit, a withdrawal into militarist chauvinism, among portions of the Israeli population, both Ashkenazic and Sephardic. In part, this is a quite understandable response to Arab assault and intransigence; in part, it is an overconfidence resulting from Israeli military victories.

But the most important cause of the changing Israeli atmosphere has been the gradual breakdown of Labor Zionism. Suffering the usual bruises of time and power, it has lost its sense of direction, its moral élan. As a result, ideologies and political outlooks that were previously marginal in Israel—religious-nationalist, brute-imperialist, ecstatic-messianic—have rushed in to fill the vacuum.

With some of the voices he has recorded, Oz barely argues. He seems to acknowledge, for example, that the outcries of the Sephardic Jews in Bet Shemesh, while overstated, have a fundamental validity. He finds himself bemused by the anti-Zionist religious people, as if wondering whether, in the very long run, they may not be the strand of Judaism that will survive most hardily.

But at some points Oz talks back. He reprints an eloquent speech he gave at a West Bank settlement, making once again the case that to annex the West Bank would not only make Israel an imperial oppressor but would also undermine either its Jewish or its democratic character. He tells the settlers that all the talk about power is morally appalling and a political fantasy. We Israelis are to become "the big bad wolves" of the Middle East? "Some wolf: with jaws made in the United States and claws donated by charity." And he reminds his listeners that their notion of playing David to the

world's Goliath doesn't at all correspond to the ways Israel was in fact saved by "the fateful support we had in '48 and again in '67" from some countries of the *goyim*.

What Oz finally leaves us with is less an argument than an image—the image of the small port city of Ashdod, which he visits at the end of his book. Quiet and pleasant, Ashdod is a city "planned by social democrats: without imperial boulevards, without monuments." And he contrasts Ashdod, the modest peaceful site, with brute delusions of conquest.

Amos Oz's vision of Ashdod is an attractive one; perhaps 40 percent of the Israelis still cling to it. Yet there remains a question that haunts one's mind and to which there is no ready answer: After all the blood and murder of this century, what is the likelihood that a politics of liberal moderation can cope with the religious-nationalist furies that now grip a good many people in Israel? □

MAKING THE LIST

BY JAMES ATLAS

How some books get on the best-seller list—and how some don't



IN AUGUST, William Peter Blatty, a screenwriter and author of *The Exorcist*, filed a \$6 million suit against *The New York Times*, charging that the paper had damaged sales of *Legion*, his latest novel, by failing to include it on the the best-seller list despite clear evidence that it was selling enough copies to qualify. "It doesn't matter if you're on any other national list," Blatty told a reporter from *The Washington Post*. "The only one that influences the bookstores is *The New York Times*. If you're not on that one, you need a microscope and Sherlock Holmes to find your book." His novel, which showed up on other lists, eventually appeared on the *Times's* list, in the last spot, for a week in September; but that was too late to satisfy Blatty, who claimed intentional negligence on the newspaper's part. "I want to know how they compile that list," he said. "What is

James Atlas is an associate editor of *The Atlantic*.

so scientific about the way they put their numbers together?"

Since Blatty's suit, the *Times* has been wary of discussing its exact procedure, but, according to Adam Clymer, who supervises the *Times*'s list, it's as close to a science as it can get. Like *Publishers Weekly* and *Time*, which publish their own best-seller lists, the *Times* has devised an elaborate system of keeping score that reflects sales across the country. The best-seller list is based on a sample; obviously, not every bookstore in the country can be polled. The system's intent is to estimate sales figures throughout the country based on data from the stores polled. Every week, a battery of *Times* staffers canvasses some 500 independent bookstores—"a lot of people make a lot of phone calls," says Clymer—and collates the results with sales reported by about 1,400 stores that are affiliates of local chains and by the two major national chains, Walden and B. Dalton. The figures reported by independent stores and local chains represent only a sample of sales by such stores, whereas the figures from the national chains reflect their total volume of business. To make sure that the best-seller list is not too heavily biased in favor of the national chains, the *Times* uses a weighting system that assigns a pre-determined value to each outlet, based on its size and volume of business. Clymer explains, by way of analogy: "In a public-opinion poll you tend to reach fewer blacks, and fewer still black men. It's easy to reach well-educated whites. So the numbers you get are multiplied by slightly less or more than one for balance. We do something comparable with independent bookstores."

Time and *Publishers Weekly* are just as conscientious in their efforts to make their samples representative—that is, a reflection of national sales—rather than simply a compilation of results from the stores polled. John P. Dessauer, director of the Center for Book Research at the University of Scranton, came up with a sampling of bookstores for *Time* by consulting the government census of book retailers and the American Booksellers' Association's industry profile, selecting a thousand stores, and weighting them on the basis of their geographical location, size, and type (independent, local chain, or national chain). "Think of the House of Representatives," Dessauer suggests, offering a variant of Clymer's analogy. "In the Senate, a large state

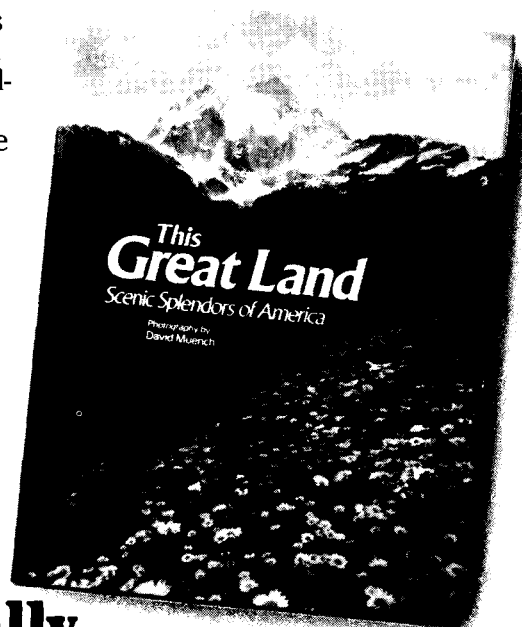
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can't outvote a small state, but in the House, the vote is weighted by population. To ensure that a chain like B. Dalton doesn't have disproportionate representation, we add a multiplier to the small stores, based on the relation of their sales figures to the number of books sold in that geographical area and the type and size of store."

PW determines its list through a similar system of points, polling close to 2,000 outlets every week, 1,500 of which are members of local chains. "I don't want a book selling at Dalton to be worth more than a book selling in some local store," says Daisy Maryles, the senior editor in charge of *PW*'s best-seller list. Unlike the *Times*, which asks booksellers to report the actual sales figures for best-selling titles, *PW* asks merely for a ranked list. "A ranked list is just as accurate—or inaccurate—as the other method," Maryles claims. "The results end up the same. We overlap with the *Times* about 90 percent of the time."

The *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* poll only regional stores, but local and national lists correlate closely, and the higher up one goes on the list, the more agreement there is. "The top three books are usually so far ahead that there's never any doubt," Brigitte Weeks, editor of the *Post's Book World*, says. The *Times*, the *Post*, and *PW* generally have in common four out of the top five titles (though often in different order) on the hardcover fiction and nonfiction lists. Divergences between national and local lists can usually be accounted for by regional interest in a book. "If a book shows up first on our list, I know why," Weeks says, citing Stephen W. Sears's *Landscape Turned Red*, an account of the battle of Antietam. "That did well because the battlefield is nearby and because it was reviewed by Jody Powell." Indeed, the national lists show considerable agreement even in the lower slots, with the ten titles cited by the *Post* appearing regularly on the *Times's* list of fifteen—if not in the same week, then within a week or two.

TO THE AUTHOR of a book that's selling well but hasn't shown up on the list, this general correlation isn't much comfort. You're either on the list or off the list. Appearance on the *Times's* or *PW's* list can influence the sale of movie rights and the floor price of paperback editions, and it's known in the trade that books move out of the stores just be-

cause they're on the list. "Once a book starts hitting the best-seller list the big chains give you support," Thomas A. Stewart, editor in chief of Atheneum, says. The book is ordered in greater quantity, is more prominently displayed, and is pushed by the salesmen. "Everyone wants to buy a book on the best-seller list," Loretta Barrett, an executive editor at Doubleday, says. "Everyone is reading it, so it has to be good." So clear is it that best sellers are more profitable than other books that clauses stipulating additional payment to the author if a book is on the list, and bonuses calculated according to what position it's in and how many weeks it's been on, are becoming standard for authors whose books have made the list before.

How many copies does a book have to sell to get on a list? The estimate that I heard most often was 40,000 to 50,000, when I recently went out looking for an answer to Blatty's question. But these numbers are highly speculative, and the reality depends on the season and other variables. Thomas Stewart recalls a novel—Robertson Davies's *Fifth Business*—that was on, briefly, when fewer than 15,000 copies had been shipped. Nearly everyone I talked to cited books they felt should have been on but weren't. "We must have sold 175,000 copies of the *Foxfire Book*," Loretta Barrett says, "but they sold in health-food stores and local bookshops that weren't counted." Frank Cermak, director of marketing at Doubleday, claims to have been involved with "any number of books that had higher sales than other books that appeared on the list, but they may not have been perceived by the booksellers as being important. Some buyers have a built-in bias against books that aren't on the best-seller list."

The case of *Legion* shows just how fluid the numbers are. "Blatty's book never showed up on our list," Brigitte Weeks, of the *Post*, says; nonetheless, a number of buyers at large chains who report to the national lists noted brisk sales last summer. "Blatty was a best seller all of June," Bill Rickman, a buyer for Kroch's & Brentano's in Chicago, reports, and Simon & Schuster claims that more than 88,000 copies, of a printing of 100,000, had gone out to the stores by the end of September. But a number like that doesn't necessarily mean a book will make the list. It could be that a book is selling vast numbers in the chains and scantily in the regional stores; that fif-

teen other titles are selling more than 100,000 copies; that stores have over-ordered, anticipating a demand that doesn't materialize. "Trying to get books on the list is a necessary part of our marketing plan," Cermak says, "but, unfortunately, there's never been any reliable pattern that we could discern."

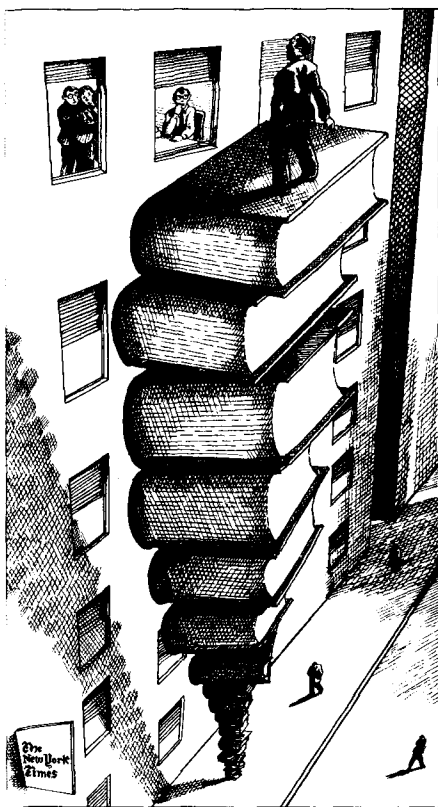
No matter how scrupulous the editors of the best-seller lists are, no matter how elaborate their procedures, they still have to depend on the figures they get from booksellers, and that's where the system is weakest. Regional lists are especially vulnerable to the method that Elissa Rabellino, an editor of the *Los*

four or five copies can get a book reported. "The fact is that, except for the chains, we're dealing with very small numbers," Maryles admits. And no matter how conscientious booksellers are, the temptations to estimate rather than count and to submit the number of books ordered rather than the number sold must be hard to resist.

IN AN EFFORT to ensure that likely candidates aren't overlooked, the *Times* sends participating stores monthly ballots that list thirty-six titles in each of four categories. The ballot, known as the "confidential best-seller report," features the best-selling books of the last week of the previous month as registered by the *Times's* computer, and booksellers are requested to fill in the number sold beside each title. The problem with this method, of course, is that it encourages respondents to rely on the titles supplied. Blank lines are provided for new titles, but, as William Peter Blatty says, "write-in candidates don't win elections."

One objection to best-seller lists persistently raised by Moral Majoritarians and religious publishers is that evangelical books are routinely excluded. Cal Thomas, vice president of communications for the Moral Majority, claimed on the op-ed page of the *Times* in September that book pollsters had devised a "gerrymandered system" that amounted to liberal censorship. Dr. Francis Schaeffer's *A Christian Manifesto*, "a serious book about civil disobedience and the history of our country," had outsold *Jane Fonda's Workout Book* by a margin of two to one, Thomas asserted, "but Jane was No. 1 on *The New York Times's* best seller list and Dr. Schaeffer was relegated to ignominious oblivion."

"I don't know anything about that book," Clymer testily retorts, but he notes that Robert H. Schuller's *Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do!* published by Thomas Nelson, one of the major religious houses, had been listed as fifth on the hardcover nonfiction list early in September. (Within a week, it had vanished from the list, never to be seen again.) Daisy Maryles, of *PW*, admits that she doesn't call religious bookstores. "But when a religious book sells in general outlets, it shows up," she says. "Chuck Colson and Billy Graham have both been on our list." Rabbi Harold Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* was on the *Times's* list



Angeles Times's list, describes as "looking at the piles and counting the ones that have gone down the most." One editor who used to work in a bookstore that reported to the local newspaper remembers employees "calling out the titles of books they liked." But even publications that solicit the number of copies sold have no way of knowing whether the figures reported are accurate. There can be any number of titles selling enough to be good prospects for the bottom of the list, and an exact ranking is often hard to come by. "Our top titles may sell in the hundreds," Bill Rickman says, "but we've reported books that sold as few as twenty copies." In a small store, sales of

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for a year, though its success was no doubt enhanced by the fact that it was published by a trade house, Schocken Books, and it was thus available in commercial bookstores.

WHAT BEST-SELLER lists have to do with literature is another story. Glancing over one *Times* list recently, I noted in the hardcover nonfiction category two "literary" titles—William Least Heat Moon's *Blue Highways* and Russell Baker's *Growing Up*—and two that qualify as "serious": *In Search of Excellence*, by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr. (number one on the list), and William Manchester's *The Last Lion*, a biography of Winston Churchill. But how-to books preponderated: *Creating Wealth*, *The F-Plan Diet*, *How to Live to Be 100—Or More*, *How to Satisfy a Woman Every Time*.

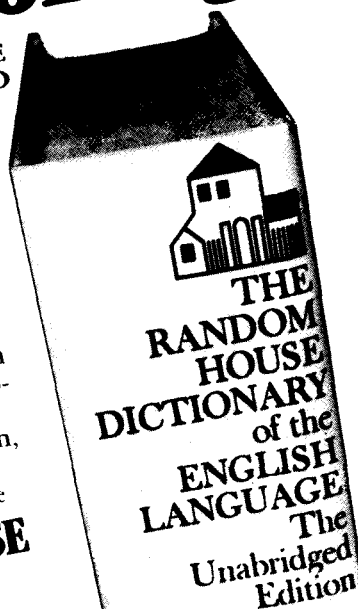
The fiction list had the usual James Michener and Stephen King, and four titles that even a snobbish literary critic would consider respectable: Judith Rossner's *August*, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, John le Carré's *The Little Drummer Girl*, and Nora Ephron's *Heartburn*. Titles I could do without included *Return of the Jedi* and a book called *Who Killed the Robins Family?* said to have been "created" by Bill Adler and written by Thomas Chastain (I wonder how a "created" book differs from one merely written); its publisher was offering a \$10,000 prize to the reader who submitted "the best answer."

All in all, I preferred the books that made "And Bear in Mind"—formerly "Editors' Choice": Raymond Carver's *Cathedral*, Cynthia Ozick's *The Cannibal Galaxy*, Robert Creeley's *The Collected Poems 1945-75*, to name a few. But these grim chronicles of human conduct offer little in the way of practical advice and aren't easy to classify (how-not-to books?); they deal in less marketable hopes—how to survive, how to make sense of one's existence—than do the books on the best-seller list.

Whatever its imperfections, the best-seller list is seen in the trade as a valuable institution, good for business because it sells books. "The audience demands it and the book industry demands it," Art Seidenbaum, editor of the *Los Angeles Times*'s book supplement, says. "Who are we to complain about what's popular as long as we can say what's good?" □

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AN ENDURING QUESTION among musical-comedy lovers is, Who, other than Leonard Bernstein, should have adapted Voltaire's *Candide* for Broadway? Voltaire liked clever, down-to-earth pessimists who take life as it comes and don't philosophize, which makes one wonder whether Cole Porter shouldn't have put *Candide* to music. The recently published *Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter* confirms that no Broadway songwriter, past or present, has had anything like this composer-lyricist's jaunty sangfroid. In 1940, three years after a horse had crushed his legs and left him all but totally lame, he was busy writing songs with such lyrics as, "I'm full of the old paprika, I'm loaded with dynamite." What is this appetite for life, if not a kind of resilience—the same resilience with which Voltaire's hero recovers from the serial beatings, fleecings, tortures, and disillusionments that his adventures visit upon him?

Music critics have called the melodies honky-tonky and repetitious. They may be. But most of the 820 lyrics anthologized in this book prove that as a writer Porter had an inimitable gift. His legend, of course, represents him as a great international swinger: the perennial table-hopper, the collector of celebrity cronies and nonconformist sexual adventures. Certainly, his lyrics do have a predictable white-tie charm. In "Night and Day" and "Let's Do It" and all the rest of his standards, one is clearly being serenaded by a jeweled nightingale from a penthouse window; most of the lyrics are suave, deft, naughty, and cosmopolitan. Suddenly, though, there will be a line like "I'm the floor when the ball is over"—the words of a person who isn't "the top."

The *Complete Lyrics* can't be read as anything so portentous as a spiritual

Elliott Sirkín writes about the arts and lives in New York City.

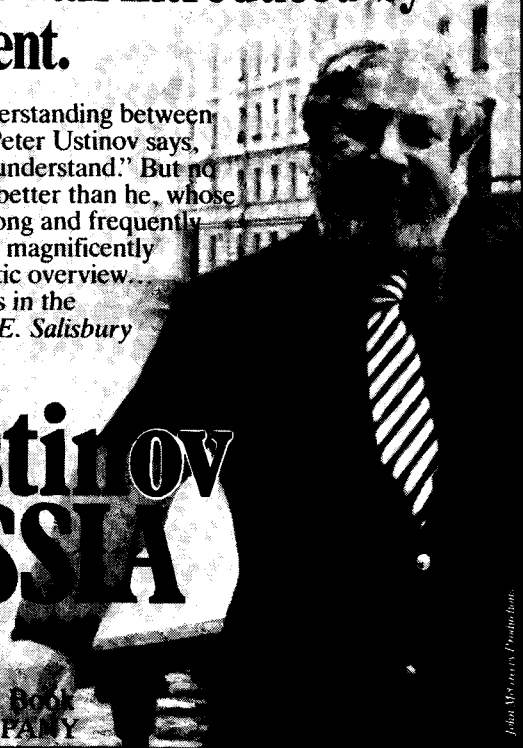
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"A piece of grim humor that Orwell would have enjoyed."

— *Bernard Crick*
(George Orwell's biographer)

"The appropriate calendar for 1984."

— *USA Today*

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October

21

1971—The NSA relays the Army request for "civil disturbance" intelligence to: USIB, CIA, State Department, DIA, CNO, AEC, and FBI. (see July 1)

1973—Sen. Church reveals that between 1953 and 1973 the CIA intercepted 28,322,796 pieces of mail and distributed over one million to other agencies during project HT LINGUAL. (see Oct. 22)

1982—A U.S. Court of Appeals rules that the NSA may legally intercept messages between the U.S. and overseas without cause, and provide summaries of intercepted information to the FBI. This marks the first time the government admits using NSA equipment to monitor U.S. citizens for law-enforcement.

autobiography. But if Porter's words are considered against what little we know of the private man, they can cast at least a few shafts of light on his inner life—a life that seems to have been something of a mess from the start. From George Eells's biography, *The Life That Late He Led*, it can be inferred that the emotional tone of Porter's small-town Indiana childhood was set by the smothering ardor of his mother, Kate, and the embittered indifference of his father, Sam. In view of this familiar, awful domestic triangle, there's something pathetic about the number of songs Porter would eventually write containing wistful phrases like "my heart belongs to Daddy" and "waiting there for Daddy." And there's something faintly comic about the number of sexier songs in which his mother's name figures: "Kate the Great" and "Katie Went to Haiti"—even "I've Got a Date with Kate." Significantly, it was the writing of a show called *Kiss Me, Kate* that rescued Porter in the 1940s from an agonizing depression—the first of many that all but wrecked his later life. (Depression does not suit Porter's legend, but the undebonair truth is that he spent his last twenty years fighting off increasingly intense periods of apathy and sadness, during which he withdrew socially and became convinced that he was going bankrupt.) At Yale, in 1911, he did write one grisly song, "The Motor Car," in which Ma and Pa are both comically mutilated in a crack-up, but that is almost the only sign of revenge fantasy in his entire oeuvre. Not to push the Voltaire comparison, but, like Candide, Porter seems to have been above petty malice, at least in his work.

In 1916, only three years after Porter's graduation, his first Broadway show, *See America First*, was produced. In the lyrics of songs like "I've a Shooting-Box in Scotland" ("I've a chateau in Touraine, I've a silly little chalet, In the Interlaken Valley") it is fascinating to see almost fully developed the habile rhyming and near-conversational fluency of his mature work. Unfortunately, the show closed after fifteen performances—a failure that caused Porter to flee to Europe. There, financed by an adoring expatriate wife, he began his famous Riviera-playboy period—a phase beloved by those who idolize Porter chiefly for his life-style, and vaguely repellent to those who admire him as an artist. This was the era of such snapshots as the famous one of Porter reclin-

ing on a Mediterranean beach, in bathing cap and pearls.

Candide languished during his brief stint as a pasha. Was Porter any happier in the lap of inert luxury? The lines "I'm an extra man" and "I'm a gigolo" in two little-known songs that he wrote in the twenties suggest that his attitude was one of self-disgust and self-reproach. Perhaps grimmest and most revealing of all is the obscure "The Queen of Terre Haute" (1929). This is the wan confession of a girl whose parents gave her everything that could improve her station (including "a string of pearls"). Her complaint is that "Instead of being famous, I'm an unknown ignoramus, from a small Middle Western town."



Information about either Broadway or Porter in the twenties is surprisingly scarce, and therefore it is impossible to know just why he produced so few songs in a decade whose hedonism and irreverence should logically have been the ideal inspiration for his talent. But what evidence there is suggests that in those years musical comedy, still in its cradle, could not make room for more than one highbrow, and the highbrow of the moment was Gershwin.

It wasn't until 1928 that Broadway saw its first Porter hit (albeit a modest one): *Paris*. Then, in 1934, *Anything Goes* was produced; the Gershwins had turned to opera, and this musical made Porter the undisputed king of Broadway in the thirties. The next five years brought the insolent, sumptuous ribal-

dry of *Red, Hot and Blue*, *Leave It to Me!*, and *Du Barry Was a Lady*. (In this period, just about any show that wasn't by Cole Porter was by Rodgers and Hart, which explains why connoisseurs consider the late thirties the high noon of musical comedy.)

IN THE SCORE for *Anything Goes*, there are countless outbursts expressive of a state of mind that can only be called euphoric. The great lines of the title song—"In olden days," and so on—toss together such bizarre images as former millionaires begging for change in the street and Eleanor Roosevelt reading commercials for Simmons mattresses on her radio program. The crazy, cavalier justification "anything goes" makes every loony thing that was happening in 1934 seem silly and trifling. Dr. Pangloss would have loved the apparent message—the Depression is all for the best; we'll just laugh it away—and he would not have noticed the rather scornful nihilism that underlies the chatty nonchalance. In "You're the Top," from the same musical, 105 lines of intricately rhymed couplets shake a cornucopia stuffed with the prize products of Europe and America. ("You're a Botticelli, You're Keats, You're Shelley, You're Ovaltine.") The song is so loaded with compliments that one has to search for the fine print: if somebody is the top, somebody else must be the bottom.

Porter had a gift for telling dark home truths without violating the essential cheerfulness of comedy. In a line from a forlorn little meditation called "I Loved Him But He Didn't Love Me" (1929), he mentions the "weary wail" that attends a marriage in which the timing is always bad, and in spite of the romantic gaiety and the antic, unruffled swank of most of Porter's work, weariness and wailing are his most telling sounds. *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), his musical *Taming of the Shrew*, is generally considered his finest score, but its prettiest standard, "So in Love," is the monologue of a lover who forsakes all pride and self-respect to beg for the continued contaminated pleasures of a sado-masochistic affair ("So taunt me and hurt me . . ."). "It's All Right with Me," from *Can-Can* (1953), sounds like a happy little fox-trot until you realize that the only emotion in the lyrics is the faintest spasm of desire at the distant prospect of another one-night stand.

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and his asymptotes. He is pursued by yellow paper that cries to be written upon. He flees to the Underground with a glockenspiel, only to bounce back to the hospital, where Death, who looks rather like a grubby chimpanzee, lurks under the bed and grouches about his employment. He would prefer to be Action, who is at the moment in jail and complaining that most of his time is spent there. Hospital is garrulous, so is Memory, so is Word, so is the glockenspiel, and so, in a weary way, is God, but none of them will tell Kleinzeit what is happening to him. Individual loneliness and bewilderment in an increasingly complicated world are common subjects in contemporary fiction. Mr. Hoban makes them not only novel but enormously comic.

THE COURTING OF MARCUS DUPREE by Willie Morris. Doubleday, \$15.95. Marcus Dupree, of Philadelphia, Mississippi, was such a brilliant player of high school football that universities showered him with scholarship offers and his fellow citizens took a great, and generally sympathetic, interest in the black youth's future. Since Philadelphia is the place where three civil-rights workers were murdered the year Marcus Dupree was born, the local attitude represented real change, and Mr. Morris spent a great deal of time studying the town and the people, in hopes of understanding the alteration. His book includes, naturally, such matters as football recruiting methods (alarming) and coaches' salaries (outrageous). It does not include the reasons for Dupree's decision to go to Oklahoma, and this omission exemplifies the slight vagueness in Mr. Morris's attempt to describe the modern South. He is an intelligent observer, a fine reporter, and a southerner, but one is left with the suspicion that in Philadelphia he encountered an invisible and impenetrable wall.

THE ENTHUSIAST by Gilbert A. Harri-son. Ticknor & Fields, \$19.95. Thornton Wilder is the enthusiast of the title, and his life story justifies the term. Novelist, playwright, screenwriter, teacher, traveler, actor, friend—he was all of those, and played each role with devotion and distinction. He was also, as his biographer unobtrusively makes clear, a most likable man.

ONE FAIRY STORY TOO MANY by John M. Ellis. University of Chicago, \$17.50. When the Grimm brothers first pub-

lished their collection of folk and fairy tales, in 1812, they announced that the stories had been written down precisely as illiterate German peasants had spoken them. This, Mr. Ellis maintains, was a flat lie, and he produces convincing evidence that many of the narrators were literate, middle-class people of French descent, and that the tales were not only polished up for publication but regularly revised for later editions. The wicked stepmother, for instance, was a Grimm bowdlerization; she was originally the natural mother. None of this information need worry admirers of what has become a children's classic, but it does give Mr. Ellis generous opportunity to reproach his predecessors in the field of Grimm study. There is a certain malicious pleasure to be derived from observing a courteous scholarly hatchet job, and Mr. Ellis's cutlery work is, in this respect, highly satisfactory. His call for dethronement of the Grimms as the fathers of folklore research will, however, probably go unheeded, because, although the brothers did not do what they claimed to have done, their followers dutifully did what they believed the Grimms to have done and, now armed with tape recorders, are still at it.

RACING ALONE by Nader Khalili. Harper & Row, \$14.95. Mr. Khalili, a professional architect, returned to his native Iran with a seemingly mad ambition. He wanted to devise a form of building that would be comfortable, cheap, earthquake-proof, and composed of indigenous materials combined by indigenous skills. After years of experiments, frustrations, adventures in remote villages, and the revolution, he devised a building method that met all his requirements. He came up with a pottery house—a mud building fired to become one huge, hollow brick. The account of his proceedings would be interesting in any case, because his sophisticated employment of adobe can be usefully duplicated in places other than Iran, but since Mr. Khalili is an exceptionally graceful, even poetic, writer, his book is delightful as well as informative. It is, in fact, downright exciting.

THE FILE by Penn Kimball. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$15.95. Mr. Kimball, who "never joined anything that could remotely be classified as subversive," nor ever considered doing so, nevertheless had a hunch that the government

was meddling in his affairs. He resorted to the Freedom of Information Act, and after much delay and difficulty extracted enough of the file that was indeed being kept on him to discern that he had been, for more than thirty harmless years, classified as a "dangerous national security risk," on the vague suspicions of anonymous informants and despite specific assurances of his patriotic character from people who were willing to stand publicly by their opinions. Quite apart from the injustice done Mr. Kimball, his story reveals a degree of official stupidity, and a waste of time and money, that should raise any taxpayer's hackles like rockets.

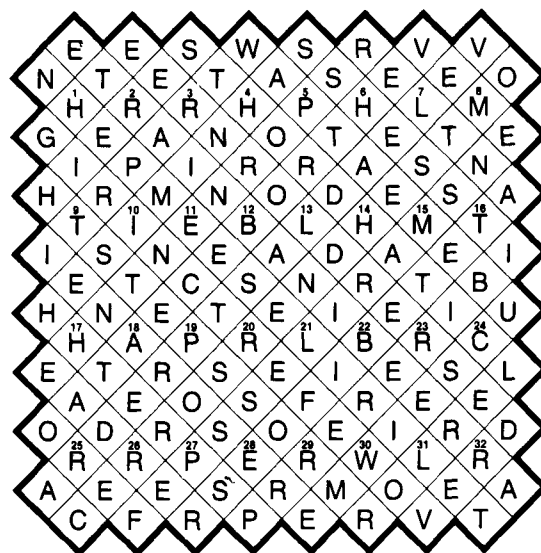
THE AENEID translated by Robert Fitzgerald. Random House, \$20.00. Professor Fitzgerald's translation of Virgil is as fine as his previous translations of Homer. What more could anyone ask?

JOSEPH CONRAD: A CHRONICLE by Zdzisław Najder. Rutgers, \$35.00 and \$14.95. As a Pole (now exiled), Mr. Najder has had access to extensive information on Conrad's background and the native connections that the novelist maintained throughout his life. He brings to this material, and to his thorough study of Conrad's years abroad, an understanding and sympathy of which only a fellow countryman is likely to be capable. This is a splendid biography of a great writer who was also a resolute survivor of formidable vicissitudes.

NOMADS OF NIGER by Carol Beckwith and Marion van Offelen. Abrams, \$45.00. Ms. Beckwith photographed the Wodaabe, who survive in the arid section of Niger by moving their animals from one stingy water hole to the next. Ms. van Offelen observed the Wodaabe and collected information about their habits, beliefs, myths, and amusements. The collaboration has produced a stunningly beautiful book with a lively and varied text. The Wodaabe are decidedly formal people, restricted by innumerable and somewhat eccentric rules of etiquette, but they do share one diversion with sedentary decadents. They hold beauty contests. The contestants are the young men of the tribe, and the photographs of these fellows, feathered, beaded, painted, elaborately costumed, and grinning hopefully at the female judges, are a sight not to be missed.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Answers to the November Puzzler, "EIGHTS"



1. H(EIGHT)EN 2. REPARTÉE (anag.) 3. REST-RAIN 4. HAWT-HORN (*what* anag.)
5. PA'S-SPORT 6. HEA(THE)RS 7. LEVELEST (anag.) 8. MO(V)EM-ENT (anags. + v)
9. T(HIRT)IES 10. I-M(PR)INTS 11. (f)E(MINE)NCE 12. BA(SEBOR)N (rev.) 13. LANDLORD (anag.) 14. HARDHEAD (anag.) 15. MESS(MAT)E (*seems* anag.) 16. T(I-BET)ANS
17. HEATH (H)EN 18. A-N(T)EATER 19. P-ROSPECT (*p* + anag.) 20. REST(RES)S
21. L-I-FELINE 22. BER(I)BER-I 23. R(ETIR)EES (rev.) 24. CU(B-IC)LES (*clue's* anag.) 25. ROA(D) R-ACE 26. RE(F-ERR)ED 27. PRO-SPERS (*press* anag.)
28. ES(PRES)O 29. RE-FORMER 30. W(IRE)-W-OR-M 31. LOVELIER (anag.) 32. RETARRED (homophone)

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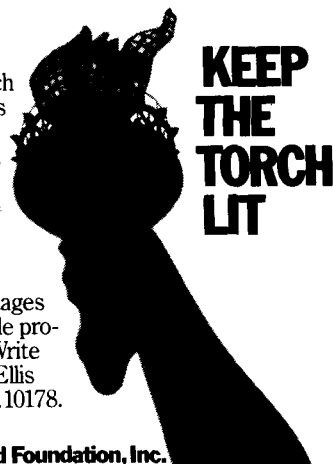
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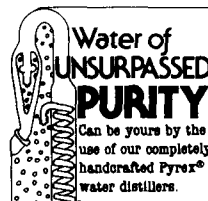
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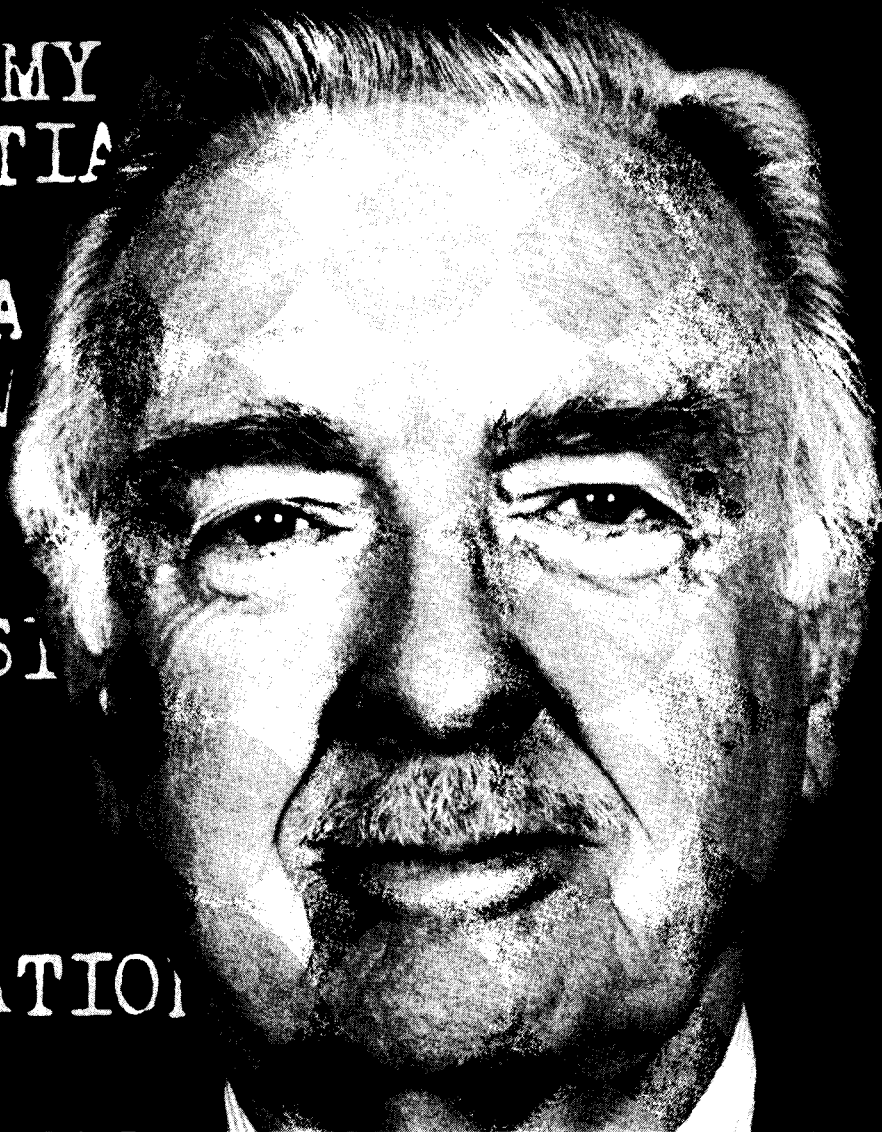
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SOMETHING
SPECIAL

THE ATLANTIC PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

MEDLEY

In this puzzle, clue-and-answer combinations are of five different kinds.

Anagrams (A): Each clue answer must be anagrammed into a new word before entry into the diagram.

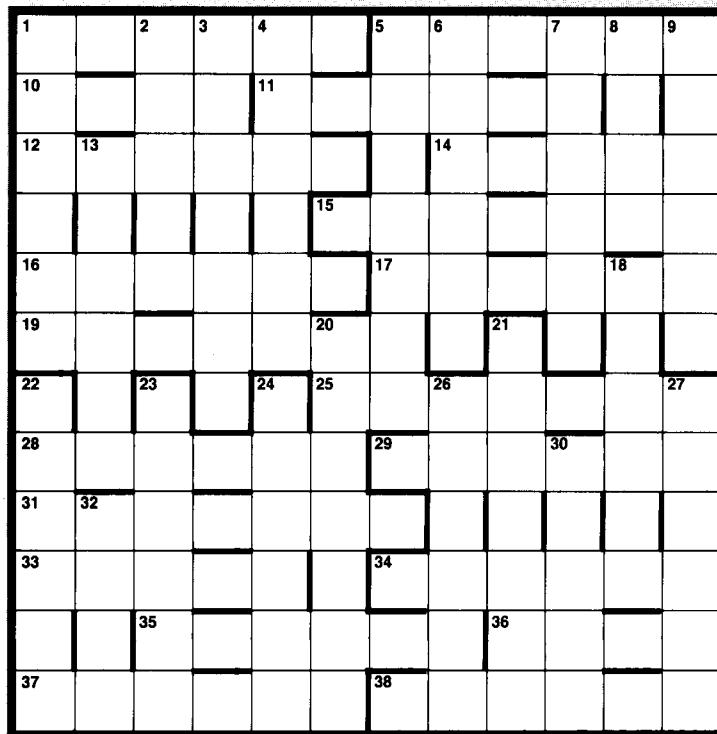
Misprints (M): Each clue contains a misprint of one letter, always in the definition half of the clue. Answers are entered normally.

Right and Left (RL): Clues are presented in pairs. Solvers must determine which answer goes on the left side of the diagram and which goes on the right (the words may be clued in either order).

Wrong Number (WN): Each answer should be entered at a number different from its clue number. The appropriate number's clue contains a definition of the answer to be entered at that location. Procedure recommended is to solve a clue and then find a definition of this answer in another WN clue to a word of the same length; this shows where the answer belongs.

Letters Latent (LL): One letter is deleted from each answer before entry. The eight letters thus deleted, taken in order with Acrosses preceding Downs, will spell out a phrase descriptive of this puzzle.

Answers include five proper nouns.



The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 117.

ACROSS

- RL 1. Agitation I'd turned back,
5. having the right fortitude to master a medley of clues (6,6)
- WN 10. First lady, on roan, finally gets balanced (4)
- LL 11. Small California island (7)
- M 12. Clergyman occupies a position by east altar (6)
- A 14. Group has to fight (5) (*hyph.*)
- A 15. Tower near-ruined in MIT (7)
- RL 16. In ravine, English king ar-
17. ranged and stored nuts (6,6)
- A 19. Permission required by public ensemble (7)
- LL 25. Parrot is flying to landing places (8)
- RL 28. Lawyer backing "The Great-
29. est Barbarian Woman" keeps
- too perversely calm (6,6)
- M 31. Essay about people's intricate lives (7)
- LL 33. Sounds like one leaving school (6)
- M 34. Bears migrating to southern glades (6)
- LL 35. I tame it—wild ape (7)
- WN 36. In a new way, rove again (4)
- RL 37. Government agent, having
38. gotten old, quit jumping in cots with drinks (6,6)

DOWN

- WN 1. Attend to tinsel in a big mess (6)
- A 2. Poetry in this would be backward (5)
- M 3. Boast about triter novel (7)
- WN 4. Had a nap taken, we hear (6)
- M 5. Roman to make bet (7)
- LL 6. Stopped keeping N.Y.'s subway sullied (7)
- A 7. He has skills in card game (6)
- WN 8. Nero not stable in metropolis (4)
- WN 9. One placed in large tent is present but not visible (6)
- A 13. Cigar: it goes off (6)
- M 18. Fish eating the hardest (7)
- LL 20. Beatniks outside-topless bars (8)
- LL 21. Float lob artfully in game (8)
- WN 22. Gold hidden in Massachusetts swamp (6)
- LL 23. Saying deer has swallowed can (7)
- A 24. Ring left in Circe's grasp (6)
- M 26. Shoot at round stud (6)
- M 27. Celt sowed seeds around pole (6)
- A 30. Trade wrongly judged (5)
- WN 32. Road to city west of New England (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, write to The Atlantic Reprint Department, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116, enclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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